

Gerd Wikan

# Rural development in Botswana

Høgskolen i Hedmark  
Rapport nr. 5 – 2003

Online-versjon

Utgivelsessted: Elverum

Det må ikke kopieres fra rapporten i strid med åndsverkloven og fotografiloven eller i strid med avtaler om kopiering inngått med KOPINOR, interesseorgan for rettighetshavere til åndsverk.

**Forfatteren er selv ansvarlig for sine konklusjoner. Innholdet gir derfor ikke nødvendigvis uttrykk for Høgskolens syn.**

I rapportserien fra Høgskolen i Hedmark publiseres FoU-arbeid og utredninger. Dette omfatter kvalifiseringsarbeid, stoff av lokal og nasjonal interesse, oppdragsvirksomhet, foreløpig publisering før publisering i vitenskapelige tidsskrift etc.

Rapporten kan bestilles ved henvendelse til Høgskolen i Hedmark.  
(<http://www.hihm.no/>)

Rapport nr. 5 - 2003  
© Forfatteren/Høgskolen i Hedmark  
ISBN: 82-7671-276-2  
ISSN: 1501-8563



# Høgskolen i Hedmark

|   |                   |                  |  |
|---|-------------------|------------------|--|
| <b>Title:</b> Rural development in Botswana   |                   |                  |  |
| <b>Author:</b> Gerd Wikan   |                   |                  |  |
| <b>Number:</b> 5  | <b>Year:</b> 2003 | <b>Pages:</b> 94 | <b>ISBN:</b> 82-7671-276-2<br><b>ISSN:</b> 1501-8563 |
| <b>Financed by:</b> The Norwegian Research Council and Hedmark College  |                   |                  |  |
| <b>Keywords:</b> Livelihoods, rural households, poverty, Botswana, Africa   |                   |                  |  |
| <p><b>Summary:</b> Development is a complex process; it often leads to growth at some places while it at the same time leads to stagnation at another place. Development can mean prosperity for some groups and poverty for others. Botswana has had a high economic growth rate the last twenty years – a growth rate which has lifted the country out of the group of least developed countries to a middle-income country. An interesting question is what are the regional and social consequences of this growth? I will not try to give a comprehensive answer to this question. This collection of papers is based on a reserach project which startetd in 1980 and endend in years 2000. Thus, the conclusion is based upon data collected over a time span of twenty years. By doing a re-study of the same two rural villages twenty years after, I will be able to tell how the general development process in Botswana has manifested itself on rural household standard of living and their livelihood strategies. In the first article I give a general overviev of the development in Botswana the last twenty years. The next two articles discuss the livelihood situation for the rural households. In the last article I decribe the complex set of livelihood strategies which rural households apply in order to make a living.</p> |                   |                  |  |





# Høgskolen i Hedmark

|   |                           |                  |  |
|---|---------------------------|------------------|--|
| <b>Tittel:</b> Rural development in Botswana  |                           |                  |  |
| <b>Forfattere:</b> Gerd Wikan   |                           |                  |  |
| <b>Nummer:</b> 5  | <b>Utgivelsesår:</b> 2003 | <b>Sider:</b> 94 | <b>ISBN:</b> 82-7671-276-2<br><b>ISSN:</b> 1501-8563 |
| <b>Oppdragsgiver:</b> Norges Forskningsråd og Høgskolen i Hedmark   |                           |                  |  |
| <b>Emneord:</b> Fattigdom, levekårsstrategier, landsbyhushold, Botswana, Afrika   |                           |                  |  |
| <b>Sammendrag:</b> Utviklingen i Botswana de siste 20 årene har vært preget av høy og stabil økonomisk vekst. Botswana er et land som har oppnådd sin velstand gjennom råvarebasert vekst i kombinasjon med klokt lederskap, stabile sosiale og politiske forhold og ikke minst en gunstig geopolitisk beliggenhet. Det er mulig å si at inntekten fra i første rekke diamanter, men også kveg har blitt bruk til å økte den sosiale velferden til befolkningen. Helsetilstanden, levealder og skoledeltakelse er på det høyeste nivå vi kan finne i Afrika. Likevel er det stor fattigdom, økende ulikhet i Botswana og stigende arbeidsledighet i Botswana. Det er særlig på landsbygda at fattigdommen er stor. I denne artikkelsamlingen som består av fire artikler dokumenterer jeg hvordan levekårssitasjoner er på landsbygda i Botswana i dag sammenlignet med for tyve år siden. Jeg viser også hvilke ulike levekårsstrategier landsbyghushold anvender for å overleve. Resultatene som presenteres i artiklene er basert på to feltstudier, en i 1980 en i år 2000. |                           |                  |  |



# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction .....                             | 9  |
| Unequal Development: the Case of Botswana..... | 11 |
| Poverty in Rural Botswana.....                 | 39 |
| Poverty and Inequality in Rural Botswana ..... | 57 |
| A Study of Rural Livelihoods in Botswana ..... | 73 |





## **Introduction**

Lack of economic growth is a characteristic of the development in Africa south of the Sahara. Aggregate figures show that the current economic situation in Africa south of the Sahara can be compared to the level in the 1960's. In contrast with the positive economic growth seen in many Asian and Latin American countries, development in sub-Saharan Africa appears to be characterised by stagnation and decline, rather than growth and progress.

Lack of economic development has led to a growing scepticism to grand economic development theories and strategies. The focus has shifted towards a more open-ended perspective where the local context and poverty alleviation are in focus. As a result, the new key concepts in the discourse are livelihoods and urban-rural linkages. The academic interest is focused on the question: how are African households surviving given their increasing difficult economic circumstances?

In the African context, Botswana is a special case. It is rich; it has a very small and relatively homogenous population and has had a stable democratic development throughout the whole independence period. Situated in the land-locked central part of Southern Africa the peaceful and successful development of Botswana is quite an achievement. However, Botswana's economic progress and development has not had the anticipated spread effects, from the urban to the rural economy, from the privileged to the poor.

*Poverty amidst plenty* is an often-used slogan to describe the present state of development in Botswana. The development processes is a differentiation process, and at the present stage a number of households live in utmost poverty, whereas Gaborone was given the name Benz City because of the number of Mercedes Benz around.

On this background on wealth and poverty, I will show how different groups of rural household are making a living, how the poor are managing to stay alive, how the middle income households are planning for survival and security and how the rich are making sure they stay rich and continue accumulating wealth. In short, the main focus of this collection of papers is to describe and explain the livelihood of the rural households.

Development is a complex process; it often leads to growth at some places while it at the same time leads to stagnation at another place. Development can mean prosperity for some groups and poverty for others. Botswana has had a high economic growth rate the last twenty years – a growth rate which has lifted the country out of the group of least developed countries to a middle-income country. An interesting question is what are the regional and social consequences of this growth? I will not try to give a comprehensive answer to this question. This collection of papers is based on a research project which started in 1980 and ended in years 2000. Thus, the conclusion is based upon data collected over a time span of twenty years. By doing a re-study of the same two rural villages twenty years after, I will be able to tell how the general development process in Botswana has manifested itself on rural household standard of living and their livelihood strategies.

In the first article I give a general overview of the development in Botswana the last twenty years. The next two articles discuss the livelihood situation for the rural households. In the last article I describe the complex set of livelihood strategies which rural households apply in order to make a living.

## **Unequal Development: the Case of Botswana**

Lack of economic growth and poverty is a characteristic of the development in Africa south of the Sahara. Aggregate figures show that the current economic situation in Africa south of the Sahara can be compared to the level in the 1960's. In contrast with the positive economic growth seen in many Asian and Latin American countries, development in sub-Saharan Africa appears to be characterised by stagnation and decline, rather than growth and progress. However, there are great differences between the countries of the region.

In the African context, Botswana is a special case. It is rich; it has a very small and relatively homogenous population and has had a stable democratic development throughout the whole independence period. Situated in the land-locked central part of Southern Africa the peaceful and successful development of Botswana is quite an achievement. However, Botswana's economic progress and development has not had the anticipated spread effects, from the urban to the rural economy, from the privileged to the poor. This paper will focus on the unequal development in Botswana. First it will describe the regional disparities before considering the question of poverty. Lastly it takes up the discussion of coping strategies. Before proceeding, however, I will give a brief discussion of Botswana's economic miracle.

## **The economic miracle**

At Independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world. Unlike many former British colonies or protectorates, Botswana inherited almost no physical or social infrastructure. The only manufacturing enterprise in the whole country was an abattoir, Botswana Meat Commission. There were hardly any formal jobs created. In the period of the British Protectorate from 1885 Botswana was a labour reserve for South Africa. Wage income was dependent on work in the mines and farms of South Africa. This gave an important extra income to agrarian production, which was becoming increasingly more unreliable due to the difficult climatic factors, increasing population pressure and the increasing commercialisation of the ranching industry. At Independence 40 % of the national budget was balanced by British aid. Thus, in 1966, this country with its unfavourable conditions for agriculture, no known mineral resources and small population was given a very bleak future.

Today, Botswana is classified as an upper-middle income country and is one of the three richest countries in Africa (World Bank 1998). It has in fact been the world's fastest growing economy since its independence (Harvey 1995.) The average annual growth in real terms, during the entire post-independence period has been about 13 per cent (Hope 1996). This impressive economic growth is mainly due to diamonds. After independence rich diamond fields were discovered and the country is at the moment the world's second largest producer of diamonds. In addition to diamonds, the cattle sector has contributed to economic growth. There has been a significant expansion of the national cattle stock and of beef exports in response to the favourable export prices offered by the European Community. But still, diamonds are the single most important commodity. Diamond exports account for about eighty per cent of the export earnings, copper-nickel and meat products for nine per cent (Hope 1996)

As a result of the excellent economic growth, the government of Botswana has been able to develop both physical and social infrastructure (Harvey 1995). Hence, most human capability indicators on health and education show very impressive figures in an African context. According to Harvey (1995), there are equally impressive statistics showing progress in physical infrastructure such as roads and water supplies.

Botswana's geopolitical situation in combination with a liberal western-orientated government must also be evaluated as positive factors in the country's economic success. Situated in the middle of Southern Africa, with neighbours that included apartheid South Africa, communist Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola and socialist Zambia, Botswana became a favourite for western aid donors.

Other commentators also point to the good development management of the Botswana government as a major reason behind the stable and remarkable economic growth up to the beginning of the 1990 (Hope 1995).

Lack of formal jobs remains still a major problem despite a increase in formal employment. The percentage of the population employed in the formal sector has increased from 29 % in 1981 to 48 % in 1995 (BIDPA 1997). At the same time employment in traditional agriculture has decreased from 47 % to 16%. This figure is an indicator of a exceptional change in the Botswana economy. In spite of the rapid increase in formal sector employment the unemployment rate has doubled. In 1994 22 % of the labour force was unemployed. Since 1991 formal job creation has slowed down, whilst the exodus from traditional agriculture has continued.

Some commentators claim that part of the problem is Botswana's membership in the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU). The Customs Union Agreement gave South Africa both the rights to determine the external tariffs applied by all members and the responsibility for managing tariff receipts. There are several problems connected to this issue, but of special interest in the present case is the fact that the member countries are not permitted under the agreement of SACU to raise tariff barriers against manufactured products. Today South African products freely enter the markets of Botswana. The effect has been that in Botswana the manufacturing sector is very small and mainly geared towards the production of light consumer goods (Hope 1996).

In 1992 the economic growth rate started to slow down. The growth rates in the 1992-94 period were only 2 per cent per year. Are these decreasing growth rates an indicator that Botswana's economic growth was just a flash in the pan? Edge (1998) doesn't think so. He argues that that the high growth rates in combination with social development and conservative

fiscal management indicates that Botswana will continue its economic development also in the future. However, also Edge admits the problem of lack of manufacturing development and unemployment. The latest figures for GDP 1996/97 show that growth is picking up again at a rate of 6.9 percentages, at constant prices.

However, despite Botswana's rapid growth and economic success, there is now concern that uneven development, as exhibited by rising unemployment, persistent poverty and grave income inequalities, is becoming a serious problem.

The development debate in Botswana is partly a debate about figures and partly a debate that is becoming more and more focused on poverty alleviation and targeting. Reviewing the literature shows that there are three intertwined questions that dominate the poverty debate; Is poverty increasing, is inequality increasing and what are the causes of poverty.

The question of regional imbalance is not very much in focus in the current academic debate. However, the problem of unbalanced growth is of concern in the national planning policy debate (NDP8).

### **National development strategies**

Income inequality in Botswana has been a matter of official concern since Independence. The founding official policy document, the Transitional Plan for Social and Economic Development, stated that:

A more equitable distribution of income is a long range objective of Government Policy. (Hudson and Wright 1997)

A more equal income distribution is seen as a key component of social justice, a basic objective of Government's development policy since Independence (NDP 2 and NDP 8). In the latest development plan the Government's policy is formulated as follows:

One of the challenges during NDP 8 will be to reduce both relative and absolute poverty through increased incomes and employment creation (NDP 8 p.96).

The Government has invested considerable resources in developing different programmes aiming at reducing poverty. Free health service and schooling, labour intensive rural road construction, drought relief programmes Financial Assistance Policy, ALDEP and so forth. On the other hand, one can also point to government policies that have not been supportive of greater equality. Programmes favouring the rural elite, TGLP and subsidies to cattle farmers are examples (Fidzani 1998).

The urban bias in the modernisation project, with most of the job creation in urban areas, has disfavoured rural areas. One can say that the Government rested their development policy on a belief in «trickle down effects». The official believe was that investing the large return from the mining industry into physical and social infrastructure the growth effects would spread to other sectors of the economy and thereby include an even greater proportion of the population in the modernisation project. Reading the latest development plan shows that even though government reports admit that poverty and lack of modernisation of the rural economy is still a problem, they continue to recommend the same medicine. A major goal is to diversify the economy, privatise more of the public sector, urbanise the rural areas and thereby create employment and provide people with the opportunity to earn income (NDP8). There are for instance no plans to stop migration from the rural areas, no plans to support arable production. Botswana's economic growth has so far been good for those in the cattle sector and for those with wage employment. However, a growth based on mineral and beef export is very fragile; the livestock sector is vulnerable both to climatic changes and to changes in the international market. Botswana has no influence on the international market for diamonds. Reading the government's development plans reveals the concern for lack of manufacturing jobs and other private sector work.

### **Poverty and inequality**

Whether the economic growth which has brought Botswana to the position of one of the most prosperous countries in Africa has led to a generally better standard of living, and a decline in the number of poor households is a central question in the development debate. Most of the sources I know

of conclude that living conditions generally have improved but that poverty is still a major problem in Botswana.

Studies made by the Ministry of Finance (1997) conclude that 47 % of the people and 38 % of the households were living in poverty in 1993. That is, 620, 000 individuals or 100, 000 households. Poverty as defined in this study includes incomes for covering basic needs and income that allows one to take part in social life.

Due to the choice of a poverty definition that goes beyond absolute poverty the researchers felt the need to split the poverty group into two: poor and very poor. The very poor are those which in the literature are known as absolute poor or food poor. Table 1 shows that 23 % of the households were very poor. Thus, most of the poor household fall into the category very poor, that is they have problems covering basic needs.

The proportion of poor and very poor was higher in rural areas than in urban areas. 33% were very poor in rural areas, the figure for urban areas was only 7 % (MFDP 1997) A highest absolute number of both the poor and very poor was living in rural areas. In 1993/94 45,173 of the 66,150 households that were living in food poverty (very poor) were rural households.

**Figure 1: Estimated national household poverty by poverty groups. 1985/86 and 1993/94.**

|                  | 1985/86 |         | 1993/94 |         |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                  | %       | HH      | %       | HH      |
| <b>Non-poor</b>  | 51      | 113,381 | 62      | 182,106 |
| <b>Poor</b>      | 16      | 35,697  | 15      | 43,354  |
| <b>Very poor</b> | 33      | 72,860  | 23      | 66,150  |
| <b>Total</b>     | 100     | 222,388 | 100     | 291,610 |

The data shows furthermore those higher proportions of the female-headed households than the male-headed households were living in poverty. In overall terms 50 % of the female-headed households were living in poverty, as compared to 44 % of the male-headed households. In rural areas the differences were less, 32 % of the female-headed households and



32 % of the male-headed households were very poor (MFDP 1997). In urban areas 10 % of the female-headed households and only 5 % of the male-headed households were very poor.

Has poverty increased? According to the figures presented by the MFDP 1997 report, it is not. The report is based on an analysis of Household Income and Expenditure surveys from 1985/86 and 1993/94. These figure shows that both the absolute and relative numbers of very poor has deceased (table 1). However, the number of poor households, poor and very poor, has been constant since 1985. It is, however, of interest to notice that the number of very poor has decreased and the number of poor above the food poverty line has increased.

There are many methodological problems linked to conducting income and expenditure studies in general and poverty studies in particular. There are problems of how to secure validity and reliability through the data collection phase, there are problems of definitions. In the case of Botswana there are huge problems linked to the theoretical and operational definition of household. It is unclear from the publications, which definition is being used. This makes comparison with other studies difficult. In addition one might criticise the present study for the size of the sample which is small, especially in rural area. Of a total sample of 3,600 households, only 908 are rural. This is little when still 47 % of the households in Botswana are rural. The size of the sample demands caution in analysis of the data.

However the main conclusion is strengthened by the fact that other researcher (Valentine 1993, Hudson & Wright 1996) ends up with the same conclusion; poverty in Botswana is decreasing. Valentine in addition makes an important point when he writes that as family ties are still strong, committing members to take care of each other, household members who make their living in the rural areas benefit from growth in the formal urban economy. Household members who are in waged employment still send money home to the household in the country. For this reason, Valentine concludes that the existence of this reciprocal responsibility contributes to spreading the positive effects of the economic development to more people than those who benefit directly from waged employment. This conclusion is supported by Hudson and Wright (1996), who claim to have found a general improvement of the living conditions among households in

Botswana, although they add that there are households who have not managed to participate in the overall growth and do not fit in the with general picture.

Based on the 1991 Census Hope find than 50 % of the population lived below the poverty line (Hope 1996). His study also shows that the poverty situation is gravest in the rural areas. In 1991 twice as many households lived below the poverty line in the rural areas as in the urban areas. This is more or less the same as that found in the 1993/94 survey.

However, Edge finds evidence that indicates that the number of Batswana households living below the poverty datum line is growing. A study by the Botswana government in 1989 estimated that 55 % of the national population was living below the PDL. In the rural areas the number was 64 % as compared to 45 % in 1974 (Edge 1998). There are reports that the poverty situation is becoming worse also in the bigger towns. In a study conducted in 1993 researchers found about 500 street children in Gaborone (Cambell and Ntsabane 1997). These children have run away from home, left school and spend all day on the street of Gaborone. One can look upon this as an indicator of the growing number of poor families in the capital.

There are methodological problems linked to poverty studies and none of the studies referred to are free of these, some claiming that poverty has increased, some claiming that it has decreased. Still, I feel that the conclusion from the last household survey (MDFD 1997) looks plausible. Poverty has decreased, but it is still a major problem in rural areas and among particular groups.

There is, however, no question that inequality characterises Botswana's economic growth. Development has been unequal between regions, between urban and rural areas and between households. The issue that will be discussed here is whether or not inequality is increasing.

The Income Inequality Index was published by the UN in their yearly report and showed that Botswana had the highest degree of income inequalities among the countries of the world for which statistics were available (UNDP 1994). According to Good 1993 there are indicators that

income distribution in Botswana is changing in favour of the rich, further increasing the income gap between the rich and poor.

Major surveys of household income and expenditure were conducted in 1973, 1986 and 1994. The first two studies showed that rural income distribution had become more skewed. The Gini coefficient rose from 0.52 in 1973 to 0.55 in 1986 (Harvey 1993). If we look at the figures for 1994 it shows a Gini coefficient of 0.54, thus a slightly more equal income distribution than in 1986. However one must consider how income is defined; income includes cash income and income in kind. If one only looks at cash income, Botswana shows a Gini coefficient of 0.74 (HIES 1994). It is however difficult to compare the figures because different definitions of income have been used. Thus, simply comparing the Gini coefficient from the three studies does not answer the question of whether the differences are increasing.

The rise in income inequalities follows an urban rural division. According to the HIES 1985/86 urban households earned twice as much as rural households and in 1989, the urban household in average earned three times the income of a rural household. (Hope 1996). Urbanisation seems at the same time to be positively linked to the reduction of poverty and to the increase of inequalities at a national level. The Gaborone-area and the other urban areas have less poor people than the rest of the country. Especially in the Central and North East districts there has been less improvement in poverty rates. This region is larger and has poorer and very poor people than any other region and is falling behind economically. Thus, there are reasons to believe that the regional differences in income are increasing.

Who are the poor? What are the demographic, social and economic characteristics of poor households? The National Household's Surveys gives insight into these questions.

The majority of the poor households live in the rural areas. The mineral-lead economic growth in Botswana has favoured urban area where most of the new formal jobs have been in created. Very little development has taken place in the rural based economic activities. An exemption might be cattle ranching. Professional cattle ranching are, however, an activity that

means very little income-wise for the majority of rural households. Cattle distribution is very skewed and only some few big ranchers, many of them based in urban areas, make a living from that sector. The rural poor were found to be predominantly subsistence families who owned small plots of arable land with no or small livestock holdings.

Some claim that one may use non-ownership of cattle as a single indicator to target the very poor, the food-insecure poor (Smith 1997). In Botswana, the single most important factor for food production efficiency is the ownership of cattle. Those who are without, must hire /borrow from others; they then become late ploughers and the risk of crop failure increases. These households are therefore very vulnerable in the way that they depend on others for crop production (Wikan 1991).

Female-headed households are more likely to be poor than male-headed households are. It is not possible to detect whether there is a difference in living standards between de facto and de jure female-headed households. Earlier case studies have concluded that de jure female-headed households are the poorest, while de facto female-headed households might have much higher income level (O'Laughlin 1998, Wikan 1981). This was due to the fact that they had men at work in urban areas or in South Africa.

Households where the head of household is old are also more likely to be poor. There is evidence that poor and very poor households suffer from a severe shortage of members that earn income. Large households, with high dependency ratios are poorer than small households with a low dependency ratio are. Lack of education is positively correlated to poverty. Uneducated households are more likely to be poor than households with educated household members are.

Botswana does not suffer from problems of acute homelessness. Most Botswana live in their own homes. Cash income is important for most income groups. In 1994 59 % of the male-headed households and 53 % of the female-headed households had some paid employment (HIES 1995/96). However, rich households get the majority of their income from cash sources, while the very poor depend heavily on transfer (table 2). The middle income group, that is the poor, are characterised by many income

sources of equal importance. They are the typical multi-income households in Botswana.

In rural areas consumption of own produce accounts for 29 % of income among poor male-headed households, 22 % of very poor male-headed households. Figures for female-headed households are 26 % for poor and 18 % for very poor. This shows that the very poor households are less involved in subsistence crop production. This may indicate shortages of household labour or essential farming assets among these groups. This is in accordance with findings in case studies, which show that especially female-headed household, are in shortage of labour for crop production tasks. In very marginal areas for crop production, the result was that the household discontinued crop production, while under better agricultural conditions they hired labour in order to continue (Wikan 1981). There might therefore be regional differences in the value of own produce as source of income.

Consumption of own produce is largely insignificant in urban areas and urban villages. Typically about 50-60 % of the consumption expenditure of the poor and very poor is for food and much of the remainder is for basic necessities such as clothes and footwear.

To sum up: research from Botswana identifies different poverty factors that define household income level, education, age, sex, assets, status on the labour market. The most likely groups of poor and very poor household are hence;

- The rural households.
- Female headed households
- The uneducated households
- The elderly households
- The remote area dwellers, the san people
- Household who depend significantly on arable farming

**Figure 2: Composition of disposable income by poverty group. Rural areas. Percentage.**

|                      | Net cash income* | Net transfers** | Earnings In kind | Own produce |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>Nonpoor MHH</b>   | 72               | 12              | 1                | 16          |
| <b>Poor MHH</b>      | 48               | 22              | 1                | 29          |
| <b>Very Poor MHH</b> | 53               | 24              | 1                | 22          |
|                      |                  |                 |                  |             |
| <b>Nonpoor FHH</b>   | 48               | 32              | 0                | 20          |
| <b>Poor FHH</b>      | 30               | 43              | 1                | 26          |
| <b>Very Poor FHH</b> | 39               | 43              | 0                | 18          |

*\*Net cash income: consisting mainly of cash earnings, and including unearned cash income and business profit, less taxes paid*

*\*\*Net transfers: consisting of cash and in-kind gifts and transfers received less cash and in-kind gifts and transfers given.*

## Unbalanced Growth

In 1997 Michael Lipton published a report on the development challenges in Botswana. The title of the report was “Urban Bias”. Lipton’s point was that due to the urban bias and the neglect of the agrarian sector, a massive migration to the urban areas, was to be expected. A stronger focus on the rural areas in development policy could reduce this migration.

Development since 1977 has shown no sign of a more balanced regional growth. There are considerable differences among the regions in the country and the differences follow a rural - urban line. According to Datta (1995) the percentages of households under the poverty line ranged from 21 % in Gaborone to 83% in the rural north-west region. Table 3 shows rural- urban differences along several indicators.

**Figure 3: Rural-urban differences by socio-economic indicators, 1994.**

|                        | Urban | Rural | Botswana |
|------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| HH* under poverty line | 30    | 64    | 55       |
| Average income P       | 848   | 302   | 447      |
| Under 5 mortality      | 42    | 67    | 56       |
| Children not enrolled  | 9     | 18    | 17       |

Source: Datta 1995

\*HH= household

As one can read from the table the rural households are more often poor, have a lower average income, a higher under five mortality and more non-attendance in primary schools. These figures indicate that in spite of national development strategies aimed at reducing the differences between rural and urban areas, and despite large efforts to improve of both physical and social infrastructure, there are still large regional inequalities in Botswana.

The urban bias in the development process has acted as an urban pull for the rural households. There has, however, been an urbanisation process without a parallel job creation. Diamonds have produced good revenue for the State, but the production itself has not produced spread-effects in the form of industrial jobs. Thus part of the migration to the urban areas has been a migration from rural underemployment to urban unemployment.

The small manufacturing sector in Botswana is mainly light consumer industry localised in the urban areas. The growth of the manufacturing sector averaged over 11 % a year in real terms between 1984 and 1994, but it still accounts for only 6 % of GDP.

According to Harvey (1995) Botswana has showed a remarkable growth of formal sector employment. Most of these jobs have been in the public sector and private service industry and they have been in urban areas. In 1972 48 000 were formally employed in the country and 35 000 were migrant workers. From 1972 formal sector employment grew at about 10 % a year to 182 000 in 1989 (Harvey 1993, Hope 1996, Salkin 1994).

Formal employment has, however, fallen since 1992 mostly in the private sector (Salkin 1994).

In spite of high growth rates in the economy, the job creation rate has not been able to keep pace with population growth and the migration from rural areas. Lipton who concluded that there was a need of 35000 new jobs every year focused on this problem already in 1977. Partly as a result of this study the Botswana government decided to take a more active part in job creation. They established the Financial Assistance Policy (FAP) The FAP is a system of grants the government gives to assist with setting up selected private sector business. This program is being evaluated as quite successful. According to Owusu and Samatar 1997, 8200 new jobs were created directly as a result of the FAP. The government in Botswana's active intervention in job creation in the private sector is in line with what have happened in East Asia, but very much in contrary to the World Banks SAP for Africa. In the rest of Africa we see a decline in industrial development.

Despite the problems of job creation in the urban areas, the in-migration from rural areas continues. There are huge differences in living conditions, in infrastructure development and in the opinion of the migrants as to the possibility to make an income, between rural and urban areas in Botswana. So even though not all the new immigrants to the urban areas will succeed, they perceive their possibilities there as being better than in the rural areas and so they continue to migrate. This is a process well documented in many migration studies.

The lack of progress in the agrarian economy in combination with poor job opportunities in the rural areas have worked together to push people from the rural areas.

Rural production in Botswana has traditionally rested on a combination of subsistence crop production and cattle ranching. The location of the country on the outskirts of the Kalahari desert with mainly sandy, poor soils and little and unreliable rains give marginal conditions for agriculture. Only a few areas mostly in east are considered to be suitable for arable agriculture. Mean annual rainfall varies from 650mm in Northeast to less than 250mm in the Southwest. The riskiness of agriculture also inhibits the



ability to improve farming techniques. The farmer's resistance to higher productivity methods, may well be a rational risk-minimising response by traditional farmers

Average incomes from arable agriculture are very low. Figures indicate that very few farming households are in a position to meet basic household food requirements, estimated at an average 1700 kg per year. The level of incomes generated in traditional agriculture is unattractive when compared to an annual income of P3000 at the minimum wage. Even drought relief employment schemes at P125 a month are much more attractive than traditional agriculture

Lack of development of the agrarian sector has resulted in a massive push out of arable agriculture and rural areas. Historically, agriculture was the main form of economic activity for the majority of Botswana. Much of this was subsistence arable production and cattle ownership was the main form of wealth accumulation. Today cattle ownership is very skewed. The poor do not own cattle. Apart from a few wealthy large-scale cattle farmers; there is no evidence that agriculture has historically managed to provide most Botswana with anything above subsistence level income.

**Figure 4: Employment in traditional agriculture.**

|                                   | <b>1981</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>1994</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Traditional agriculture</b>    | 148700      | 90900       | 78500       |
| <b>Proportion of labour force</b> | 47 %        | 21 %        | 16 %        |

Source: Ministry of Finance and Development 1997

During the post-independence period, the agricultural sector has declined sharply in economic importance. Its contribution to GDP fell from 40 % in 1966 to 4.2 % in 1994/95. Despite a wide range of agricultural support and extension programmes, there has been very little success in introducing improved techniques in the traditional arable sector and no improvement in yields. The production of sorghum fell from 29000 tonnes in 1979/80 to 6000 tonnes in 1983/84 before returning back to 11000 tonnes in 1992/93. As a result of highly variable rainfall, agriculture is not a reliable source of

income. Minimum prices for agricultural produce have fallen since 1984. The government has given up the agricultural policy that aimed at stimulating national production.

At the same time Botswana have taken the opportunity to leave the sector whenever possible. Relative to the formal sector, employment in traditional agriculture had fallen by 75 % in only ten years. In 1988 52 % of the farmers were over 54 years of age, only 9 % were under 35. It seems that farming is not attractive to young people. This is a new situation. Since the beginning of this century there has been a tradition for young men to take up labour migration, investing part of their earnings in cattle and other agricultural assets and settling as farmers in their home villages later in life. Changes in attitudes towards agriculture and new aspirations, as well as population pressures might have broken these traditions. There are reasons to believe that the out-migration from the rural village has become an out-migration from rural life (O'Laughlin 1998).

The analysis of agricultural production suggests that rural poverty is not just a result of drought, but is a more permanent structural condition. Production operates with high costs and low productivity. Even in years of good rainfall production is insufficient to keep many households out of poverty.

Even though the productivity and returns are low, crop production remains important for those in the rural areas without better alternatives and as an income in combination with other income sources. However, contrary to the situation in many other African countries, it seems clear that the poor and very poor in rural Botswana use subsistence farming to top-up their incomes rather than as the principal means of subsistence

In conclusion, there is no empirical evidence that poor farming households can support themselves exclusively from arable farming, let alone graduate out of poverty through arable farming. Farming is only viable as a primary source of income for relatively well off farmers, with cattle, with access to relatively large areas of fertile land. This requirement excludes the majority of poor rural households.

The lack of income opportunities in the rural areas is pushing young people out in search of opportunities in urban areas. Also, it has been suggested elsewhere that many people did not move back to agricultural activity after the end of the 1981-86 drought, particularly since the end of the drought occurred at the beginning of the period of rapid growth in other formal sector employment (Hope 1996). There are therefore major factors in the rural areas pushing young people to the urban areas. Thus the pressure on the formal urban economy to create jobs is heavier because of the underdevelopment of the agricultural sector in Botswana (Curry 1987).

The reasons for this development are found both in the old power structure and in the new. Even though 75 % of the land in Botswana is communal there is a skewed use of this land. There are some few large cattle-owners, who also happens to be the largest crop producers making an income from the rural resource, whereas the majority of the rural people are not able to make a living from the land because their resources are too small to develop the land.

### **Rural coping strategies**

The economic growth in Botswana has led to both structural and regional changes. Rural production is today unimportant in the formal economy and increasingly less important in the household economy. The settlement pattern has changed from a rural to an urban one. However, the other side of the success story is the employment situation and lack of trickle down effects. The mineral-led growth has not been able to create formal work in a tempo that kept up with the growth of the labour force. Household income surveys reveal that the country also has developed an unequal development and that at least relatively the situation is worst in the rural areas. There are huge regional imbalances in living standards and differences among households. In addition there are some few researchers that even claim that absolute poverty is growing in the rural areas. There is no argument about the fact that poverty is still a major problem, especially in rural areas. How these households are coping, how they are making a living, despite their difficult situation, is an intriguing question.

In 1980 and 1984 I examined this phenomenon in rural Botswana. The main results of these investigations are published in the paper "The split household. Multi-activity and town-country links in Botswana" (Wikan 1993). As the title indicates, multi-activity was the most widespread income strategy in Botswana at the beginning of the 1980's. The majority of the households had opted to maintain the system of generating an income from both the modern market economy of the towns and the traditional self-sufficiency economy of the villages. As most of the waged employment and other income generating work was found in the towns, and the distances were long, day-commuting was not an alternative for most people, which resulted in split households.

Households can, in principle, have several alternative sources of making a living. There may be a group of households that are completely dependent on financial income from the sale of goods or services, and these households are fully integrated into the capitalistic mode of production. Another group of households may live off the food they produce themselves or exchange within a kind of self-sufficient economy, making these households appear as if they exist in a non-capitalist mode of production. Krokfors (1995) calls this a seclusion strategy. I do not think this is a meaningful term to describe the situation in many third world countries. From a dualistic development point of view it was commonplace to believe that there were areas of the economy, which were not influenced by the market economy, where households and individual persons could continue living in a traditional way. However, I find it hard to believe that there are any such areas of significance today. What may at first glance appear to be traditional societies will, at closer inspection, turn out to be societies that are considerably altered and influenced by contact with the capitalist mode of production. There are households in the country, which survive with practically no money income. These households can be one of two very different kinds. There are those households who have the resources to make use of local resource foundation. Then there is a group of households that survive because they benefit from connections to a large family or a more prosperous household. These are the poorest households in the country, who live on food and clothes donated by other households.

In the rural areas there will also be a group of households, which makes use of resources in the spheres of both circulation and self-sufficiency.

These are the multi-active households, using a variety of combinations of sources of income to form the household's income strategy. Every household aim to utilise its resources in a way, which achieves the best possible connection between consumer needs, resources and the alternative ways in which to generate an income. Income strategy as a concept may lead to the wrong associations in that it could suggest there is a planned deliberation in choice of strategy. I believe this is not necessarily the case. The reality for most households is probably that they try, in the best possible way, to combine their resources in order to attain their goals, whether the household is at the survival end of the living conditions scale, or is prosperous. Particularly for the less well to do households I believe the degree of conscious analysis and considered choices is small. Their coping strategy is a survival strategy; a concept I will use to establish the relationship between people and crises such as unemployment, poverty and the absence of social support. It describes activities of individuals and households aimed at daily survival.

During my investigations in Botswana in the 1980's I found clear indications that it was wrong to look at households as either country households or town households. The interaction between urban and rural areas was close, which manifested itself in that a significant group of households having a place of residence in both places, and the majority of households had an economic footing both in the urban market economy and in the self-sufficient and market economies in the country.

At the beginning of the 1980's food production for own consumption was still an important activity for the majority of the households. Furthermore, many households had one or more members who were in paid employment either in the local community or in the town. Data showed that income strategies in the households were complex. There were households which lived solely off their own agricultural production, households which had paid work as their only source of income and households which were self-employed in the market sphere. However, the majority of the households turned out to be multi-active (table 5).

It was interesting to note that in 1980, the marginalisation process in Botswana had not turned most people away from the land. Figures show that the majority of the households produce food for their own

consumption. An important factor behind the absent polarisation is probably Africans' right to the use of land. All households that maintain links with their families' home villages, in principle have rights of use to the land in the villages. There were a few examples of households which did not farm their own land in 1980 and these were the poorest households who lived marginally on the charity of the other members of the extended family, combined with odd jobs and social help.

However, it is important to investigate how income strategies based on multi-activity work. Baker (1995) shows how the poorest households, are forced to sell their labour to neighbouring farms. In their case, multi-activity does not lead to accumulation and opportunities for improving economic conditions in the long run. He points out, however, that in the study areas in Tanzania as well there is a qualitatively different kind of household, which have other and more active choice potentials, namely the more prosperous households. For them, it is possible to use multi-activity as an accumulation strategy.

The 1980 households' studies also looked at the very complex connection between poverty and multi-activity (Wikan 1993). One has to look at both the number and the type of income sources. That is because some of the income sources are more insecure as a job alternative than others. The poorest households had the most insecure income sources, like beer - brewing, local farm labour, prostitution and work for other households. The most prosperous households were those combining own crop production, with ownership of cattle and wage work in the formal sector (Hesselberg 1985, Wikan 1993).

**Figure 5: Income strategies in Tutume and Letlhakeng. 1980, percentages.**

|                                       | <b>Letlhakeng</b> | <b>Tutume</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| <b>Own production only</b>            | 15                | 10            |
| <b>Cash income and own production</b> | 44                | 83            |
| <b>Cash income only</b>               | 20                | 5             |
| <b>No known source</b>                | 20                | 1             |
| <b>Total</b>                          | 99                | 99            |

Source: Own field data

Roth (1996), on the other hand, believes the situation is different. She has studied nomads in the northern part of Kenya, where she finds that it is the poorest households which often have paid work in addition to income from farming. Consequently, she sees multi-activity as a survival strategy. This necessarily only show one side of the issue. Potts describes a development in towns south of the Sahara coloured by increased poverty and insecurity for a growing group of households. She shows how this results in a new trend in Africa, namely counter-urbanisation. In addition, she finds that a continually increasing part of the poorest households choose to maintain, or even establish new, economic links with the village from which they, or their ancestors, came. Potts's (1995) claims that there is growing multi-activity among poor households in the towns. This is a parallel development to the one Potts finds in the country. Baker (1995) finds that this combination of income as a strategy is a necessity for the majority of village households. From his studies in Tanzania, he finds that 83% of the households are multi-active. He discovers that this is particularly widespread among households with little access to land. It is often they who combine farming with paid income. This he calls survival strategies, rather than considered strategies in order to accumulate wealth. The households he refers to here for the most part find work at other farms nearby.

Dahlberg (1995) interprets the fact that a large number of households have waged work in addition to farming as a clear strategy for minimising the risks. She writes that:

“It is common for households to try to limit the adverse effects of the irregular rainfall by having at least one family member in waged employment” (p.265).

However, from her studies in the northern part of Botswana, Dahlberg cannot quantify the level of multi-activity. Dahlberg (1995) finds that income strategies that are similar to what I call multi-activity are the most common in Botswana. The way in which agricultural productions are described seems still to be characterised by a high degree of sub-subsistence, with low capital investment and simple technology. Only 5% of the households are able to live off the income from their own farming production. However, Dahlberg and Blaikie (1996) claim that a qualitative change in income strategies in Botswana is about to take place, moving

away from the time when male work migration to South Africa was the only source of waged income. “Throughout Botswana livelihood strategies have changed, reflecting diversification of income sources away from farming and livestock. It is common today to hear villagers say that in dry years they do not bother to plant, that at the most they will plant only small areas, and that the young people lack an interest in farming. Instead, wages and drought relief are used to buy the necessary staples” (p. 8).

However, a preliminary result from the Poverty Study found interestingly enough that the non-poor households were the one that had the largest incomes also from non-money sources (Jefferis 1997). This result might indicate either an accumulation strategy or that linkages to rural areas still have certain cultural and/or economic values in Botswana.

They say that most households cultivate grain and some vegetables for their own consumption but emphasise that very few of these households rely solely on income from farming in order to make a living. In other words, they indirectly say that multi-activity forms the main strategy in this village. It should be noted that Kalakamate is situated in a region of Botswana, with a good climate for cultivating grain.

It is possible to hypothesise that in other more marginally situated regions of the country in which the potential for good yields is considerably poorer, the threshold is lower for abandoning one’s own grain cultivation. Should this turn out to be the case, one has to see the income strategies as influenced by external contextual conditions, the national context and the local context within which households operate. Structural changes in the labour market might have influenced the possibilities for rural development negatively. Lack of work opportunities in South Africa and lack of work for unskilled labourers in Botswana have made investment in cattle less of an option for many workers. This lack of investment in cattle means less local work for poor rural households and in the long run also discontinuation of urban- rural linkages.



**Figure 6: Number of Households involved in agricultural production. 1981 and 1991.**

|                  | Letlhakeng |      | Tutume |      |
|------------------|------------|------|--------|------|
|                  | 1981       | 1991 | 1981   | 1991 |
| <b>Crops</b>     | 65 %       | 20 % | 88 %   | 54 % |
| <b>Livestock</b> | 67 %       | 64 % | 83 %   | 82 % |

Source: Census 1991 and 1981

It is important to take regional differences into account. Even in Botswana there are differences in the physical and cultural basis for agricultural development. This follow-up study in two villages, situated in different ecological zones, questions some of the conclusions from the last national surveys; that crop cultivation is a way to poverty and that there is no future for crop cultivation as a means of poverty alleviation in Botswana (MFDP 1997).

As in 1980 poverty is still mostly a rural phenomenon in Botswana. However, we will question statements like « it is more accurate to see poverty as a result of highly averse climatic and soil conditions...»(Jefferis 1997). My hypothesis is still that the causes of rural poverty in Botswana lie in specific social changes affecting agriculture. Thus, rural poverty is produced by negative trend of grain prices compared to other prices which hamper capital investments a preoccupation with cattle in agricultural policy and lack of manpower to develop the arable sector (Hesselberg 1985, Wikan 1993).

## **Conclusion**

Botswana is an economic miracle in both a Third World context and especially in an African context. Its economic growth has been stable and high for more than 30 years. Rich diamond resources have driven this growth. In addition stable political milieu, regular democratic election, and lack of civil wars have blessed the country. The other side of the story is lack of spread- effects. The growth has been urban biased, the rural economy and thus the rural areas have not developed economically.

Poverty is today more widespread in rural areas than in urban. A consequence the diamond-lead growth has been the highest urbanisation growth in all of Africa. However, urban job creation has not been able to absorb the migration from the rural areas. Hence, urban unemployment is a problem. Unequal development is a result of the diamond-lead modernisation of Botswana. This is, however, not unique for Botswana.

In all the third world countries there has been a development, which has seen the traditional forms of production altered through contact with the capitalistic form of production. This development has been going on for several hundred years but it has gained extra momentum in the twentieth century. One of the results this has had is that these self-sufficient economies have become of less importance, for both the national and the household economies. Employment in the formal part of the economy has increased and a continuously larger part of the population gets their income from waged work. Despite these considerable upheavals in the economy there are signs which indicate that income other than money income still remains important for the living conditions of households in many third world countries.

The importance of several sources of income in order to maintain a minimum standard of living can be linked to other typical characteristics in all developing countries, including development problems such as poverty and an unstable economy. From a theoretical point of view the interesting question is whether this lack of economic growth, poverty and the subsequent necessity of households to combine many sources of income, is a structural and more permanent problem, or a transitional one.

Two qualitatively different theoretical approaches give diametrically different answers to this question. If the development is analysed from the perspective of dependency, it could be argued that the situation is best described as structural. Global capitalism leads to a polarisation of economies in which some are placed in the periphery. It is a typical feature of peripheral capitalistic economy that the development process has limited self-dynamics; capitalistic demands for accumulation and control of the market set the terms for the development. In a peripherally placed capitalistic country, employment generated as a result of the introduction of modern technology will have an effect on a global, not national, level,

because the export industry lacks links to the local industry. On the other hand, the introduction of modern technology will have a strong effect on manpower savings. There is a tendency to export positive cumulative effects, while the negative side effects remain in the country, acting as self-amplifying marginalisation processes. Investing in the export sector with advanced technology can lead to strong growth but the consequence will be increased polarisation in society, as this requires a work force with more formal education.

The polarising effect of capitalism leads to huge differences in living conditions. Households included in a positive aspect of capitalism have the opportunity to accumulate wealth. Marginalised households are trapped in a circle of poverty in which they have to work in different conditions to keep afloat. Some argue that we can see an increasing polarisation between these groups of households and that this polarisation is the result of a peripheral capitalistic development. Multi-activity as an income strategy, that is, a combination of sources of income from both the capitalistic and the non-capitalistic sectors will, in a theoretical perspective based on the concept of dependency, form a meaningful and constant part of the households' income strategy. For the marginalised households multi-activity will be seen as a means of survival, whereas for the prosperous households the strategy can be described as an accumulation strategy.

Some economists of a more conventional persuasion will reject this and claim that the differences and mass poverty seen today represent a transitional phase in the capitalistic development. With reference to history and the development we have seen in Western Europe they argue that poverty, the existence of different economic sectors and multi-activity as an income strategy was commonplace in this part of the world, too. As the capitalist economy here has become universal this has for the most part disappeared. In Western communities all that remains are small pockets of multi-activity. If the development processes in developing countries are parallel to those which have taken place in the Western capitalist countries, multi-activity will disappear as both the basis and the need for this income strategy disappear. Is this the kind of development we now witness in developing countries which are experiencing positive economic growth? Is a permanent betterment of living conditions taking place as a result of fundamental structural changes in the economy? If this is the case, the

logical hypothesis follows that the amount of multi-activity as income strategy will be reduced. Multi-activity as a strategy for generating income is a survival strategy used by the poorest households. If economic growth has led to less poverty, one should expect that there are fewer households today which would choose this strategy. One would expect a change in direction towards single-activity as the most important income strategy.

## References

- Dahlberg, A.C. & P.M. Blaikie. 1996. Environmental change in rural Botswana. Changing landscapes or different interpretations. A case study from North East District Botswana.
- Edge, W.A. 1998. Botswana: A developmental state. In Edge & Lekorwe. Botswana. Politics and Society. J.L. van Schaik. Academic, Pretoria.
- Fidzani, N.H. 1998. Land reform and primitive accumulation: a closer look at the Botswana Tribal Grazing Land Policy. In Edge & Lekorwe .Botswana. Politics and society. J.L. van Schaik. Academic, Pretoria
- Good, K. 1993. At the ends of the ladder: radical inequalities in Botswana. *The journal of Modern African Studies*, 31, 2
- Harris, O. 1981. Households as natural units. I Young, wokowitz & Mccullagh (ed.) *Of Marriage and the Market*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Hesselberg, J. 1985. *The Third World in Transition*. Nordiska Afrika-instituttet, Uppsala.
- Hope, K. 1995. Managing development policy in Botswana: Implementing reforms for rapid change. *Public administration and development*, vol 15.
- Hope, K.L. 1996. Growth, unemployment and poverty in Botswana. *Journal of contemporary African studies*, 14,1
- Harvey, C. 1995. Botswana: is the Economic Miracle Over? *Journal of african economies*, 1,3.
- Hudson, D.J & M. Wright. 1996. *Income Distribution in Botswana: Trends in Inequality since Independence*. Nonpublished paper.

- Hudson, D.J & M. Wright. 1997. Income Inequality in Botswana - Trends since independence. In Salkin et.al. Aspects of the Botswana Economy. Selected papers. Currey, Oxford.
- Lipton, M. 1978. Employment and labour use in Botswana. Ministry of Finance and Development. Gaborone.
- Itzigsohn, J. 1995. Migrant Remittances, Labor Markets and Household Strategies: A Forces Vol.74 No.
- Jefferis, J. 1997. Poverty in Botswana. In Salkin et.al. Aspects of the Botswana Economy. Selected papers. Currey, Oxford.
- Krokkors, C. 1995. Poverty, Environmental Stress and Culture as Factors in African Migration. In Baker&Akin Aina. The Migration Experience in Africa. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Lado, C. 1996. Agricultural Production and land-use pattern in Kgatleng District, Botswana. The Indonesian Journal of geography, vol.28
- Larsson, A. 1996. A House in town and a Home in the Village: Gender Analysis of Urban Commitment. Forthcoming.
- Ministry of Finance and Development 1997. Study of Poverty and Poverty alleviation in Botswana. Government Printer, Gaborone.
- Muthwa, S. 1994. Female Household Headship and household Survival in Soweto. Journal of Gender Studies, Vol.3, No.2
- O'Laughlin, B. 1998. Missing Men? The Debate Over Rural Poverty and Women-headed households in Southern Africa. The Journal of Peasant Studies, vol.25, no.2
- Owusu, F & A.I Samatar. 1997. Industrial strategy and the African State: The Botswana Experience. Canadian journal of African studies, Vol 31, 2.
- Roth, E.A. 1996. Traditional Pastoral Strategies in a Modern World: An Example from Northern Kenya. Human Organization, Vol 55, No.3
- Potts, D. 1995. Shall we go home? Increasing Urban Poverty in African Cities and Migration Processes. The geographical journal, vol 161, no.3
- Schelhas, J. 1996. Land Use Choice and Change: Intensification and Diversification in the Lowland Tropics of Costa Rica. Human Organization, Vol 55. No.3

- Smith, A.G. 1997. Human rights and choice in poverty. Food insecurity, dependency and human rights-based development aid for the third world rural poor. Praeger, London
- Taylor, J.E & T.J. Wyatt. 1996. The Shadow Value of Migrant Remittances, Income and Inequality in a Household-farm Economy. *The journal of Development Studies*, Vol.32, No.6
- Valentine, T.R. 1993. Mineral-led Economic Growth, Drought Relief, and Income Policy: Income Distribution in Botswana Reconsidered. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol.52, No.1
- Wikan, G. 1981. Absenteeism, crop cultivation and level of living in Rural Botswana. Department of Geography, University of Oslo.
- Wikan, G. 1993. Det splittede hushold. Multiaktivitet og by-land bånd i Botswana. Østlandsforskning.
- Zoomers, A. E. & J. Kleinpenning. 1996. Livelihood and urban-rural relations in Central Papaguay. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vil.87, No.2

# Poverty in Rural Botswana

## Introduction

At independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world. Today, Botswana is classified as an upper-middle income country and is one of the three richest countries in Africa (World Bank 2002). It has in fact been the world's fastest growing economy since its independence (Harvey 1995, Hope 1996, Wikan 1999 a). This impressive economic growth is mainly due to diamonds. After independence rich diamond fields were discovered and the country is at the moment the world's second largest producer of diamonds.

Poverty alleviation and a more equal income distribution are basic objectives of the Botswana Government's development policy (NDP 8, Wikan 1999b). The Government has invested considerable resources in developing different programmes aimed at reducing poverty. On the other hand, one can also point to government policies that have not been supportive of greater equality. Programmes favouring the rural elite such as subsidies to cattle farmers are one example (Fidzani 1998). Another example is the urban bias in the modernisation project, with most of the job creation in urban areas, which has disfavoured rural areas.

The common belief is that the economic growth in Botswana has led to reduction in poverty but not in inequality. Even though living conditions generally has improved; poverty is still a major problem in Botswana, especially rural poverty (BIDPA 1997, Hudson & Wright 1996, Valentine

1993, Hope 1996). And Botswana is still one of the most unequal countries to live in with a Gini coefficient of 0.54 in 1994 (HIES 1994). Income inequalities also follow an urban rural division (Datta 1995, Good 1993, Mazonde 1996, UNDP 1994). According to the HIES 1985/86 urban households earned twice as much as rural households but in 1993 the urban household in average earned three times the income of a rural household. (Hope 1996). Urbanisation seems at the same time to be positively linked to the reduction of poverty and to the increase of inequalities at a national level. The Gaborone-area and the other urban areas have less poverty than the rest of the country. Especially in the Central and North East districts there has been little or no improvement in poverty rates according to national surveys (BIDPA 1997). Some few researchers also challenge the common belief that poverty is decreasing in Botswana. Based on rural case studies Edge 1998 and Mazonde 1996 conclude that poverty has increased.

The result presented in this article is based on two households surveys. The first one was done in 1980 and the second one in 2000 (Wikan 1981a,b, Wikan 1982 a, b). The purpose of this article is to analyse rural households standard of living compared to twenty years ago. By studying the process over 20 years in two different villages I will also show how local contextual factors as well as household resources affect household's general standard of living and their livelihood strategies. The first part of this article will describe the study areas and methodology. Thereafter, it describes households standard of living today compared to how it was in 1980. The article continues by revealing how different social groups are coping with their situation. Lastly the article discusses factors determining households standard of living and livelihood strategies.

## **Methodology**

The data was gathered in formal households interviews. 320 interviews were made in 1980, and 382 in 2000. In addition to the quantitative data, 15 in-depth interviews were carried out this time. The household is a difficult concept to define in the Botswana context. It is the unit principally responsible for agricultural production. It is also a unit of consumption whose income derives from various sources. The members of the household are therefore often strewn across dispersed geographical



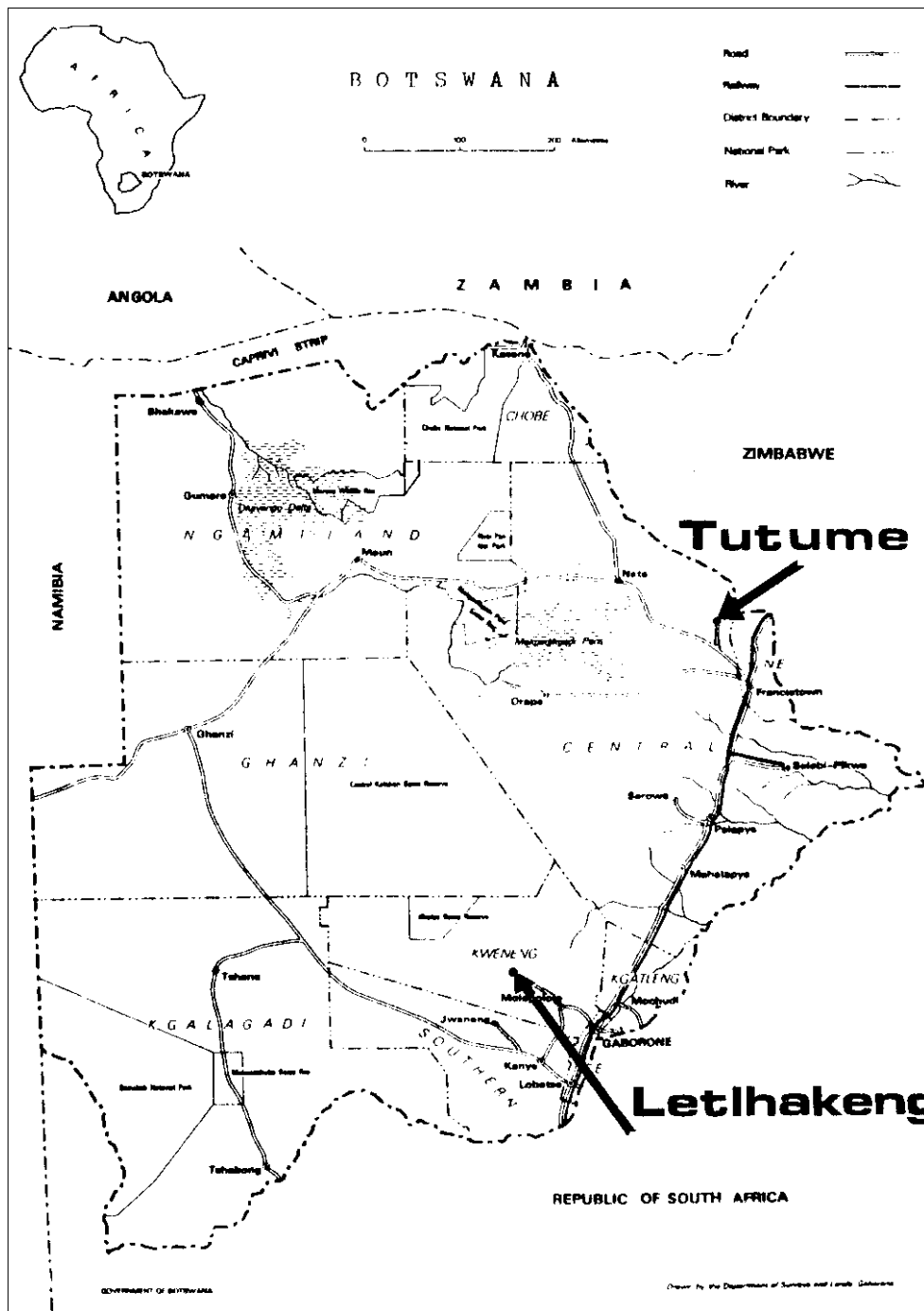
locations in pursuit of the various incomes. The household is thus rarely a complete and precise entity where residence, production and consumption neatly coincide (Selolwane 1992). This disjuncture creates some methodological problems in the study and analysis of the rural households. In the present survey I have made the following operational definition of a household; a household consists of a person or group of persons who claim to belong to a single compound and who use part of the available resources in common. They are in addition answerable to the same head. Unmarried members staying elsewhere are included when the respondents include them and when they send or bring home money and/or goods to the rural home.

In principle the same questionnaire was used in both surveys. Some adjustments had, however, to be made given the changes due to the time span between the two surveys. The standard of living of a household was measured by a composite standard of living index based on material items. To base an index on material indicators is a simple way of grouping households into standard of living groups. The selection of indicators is crucial for arriving at meaningful social groups (Hesselberg 1984). The indicators have been selected among items in general demand in the study areas. The selected indicators should reflect the economic and social situation and changes in this situation. The usefulness of the indicators has been shown in several studies (Dale and Hesselberg 1977, Wikan 1982, Hesselberg 1985). The indicators were of four types: Cheap and necessary like water buckets and blankets, middle-priced like sledge, axe, table, chair, expensive and necessary like plough and bed and expensive but not necessary like radio and watch. The households were categorized into three standard of living groups depending on the score they made on the index. If a household is poor it means that it seldom has meat on the table, it has no bed, only one proper chair, not enough blankets to keep all members warm. Its house is also in bad condition as well as the whole compound. To be a rich household means that there are plenty of beds and blankets and chairs. It has often a car; television, fridge and they all have radios. Most rich households have standpipes in their compounds and electricity in their houses. Their houses are made of bricks and of very high standard<sup>1</sup>. In

---

<sup>1</sup> See Smith, D. M 1979. *Where the Grass is Greener*. Pelican Books for a detailed description of the index.

the year 2000 survey I had to change some few indicators because of the changes that have taken place in Botswana since 1980. Radio and watch were not good indicators for something expensive and unnecessary any more. In Botswana year 2000 television and fridge are better indicators. I do not think that this has made comparison in standard of living over a period of time problematic. The items, which are typical for the poor household, are the same as in 1980. This makes it possible to compare poverty in 1980 and 2000.



## **The study areas**

The two villages of Tutume and Letlhakeng were chosen for the household study both in 1980 and 2000. In a way they are both typical Botswana villages with a range of different types of households and they are both large enough to give insight into the variation of income strategies. Given this, the villages are also different. The two villages are situated in different ecological zones, their inhabitants belong to different ethnic groups with different history, they have different local labour markets and they are at different distance from the most important labour market – the capital. Thus, comparing the villages might give an insight into how the local context influences the household's level of living and income strategies.

Letlhakeng is situated in the central part of the Kweneng District, and lies about 60 kilometres north west of Molepolole. Kweneng District is located in the south-eastern part of Botswana. The district is characterised by the sandveld at 1000 metres above sea level. Traditionally the villagers made a living from agriculture, later in combination with labour migration to South Africa. The climatic condition is better for herding cattle and goats than for crop cultivation. Thus traditionally cattle were the sign of wealth here on the outskirts of Kalahari Desert. The physical conditions for crop production can at best be described as meagre. Climatically, Letlhakeng lies in a transition zone between the more humid East Botswana and the Kalahari. The mean annual rainfall is only 400mm. In addition, there is a substantial yearly variation. Most farmers are able to grow sorghum, maize, beans and watermelons. Traditionally the organization of farm work was based on help from the extended family and other types of communal work. Today this system seems to have more or less broken down.

The village has a long history of migrant work. Letlhakeng started to send labour migrants to South Africa at the end of the 19th century. Today this situation has changed dramatically. There has been a reduction in the number of men finding work outside the village. This is mainly due to a change in the recruitment policy in South Africa. The village has had a slow population growth if we look at the whole period from 1980 to 2000. In the beginning of the period the population growth rate was high, but it has slowed down the last ten years. In 1981 the population was 2616, in

1991 4379 and in 2001 it is projected to be around 4800. As one can see from the figures, the village must have had a net immigration in the decade from 1980 to 1990, but after 1990 the growth rate has slowed down probably due to net out migration. The size of the households is more or less the same as in 1980. In 1980 the average household size was 6.3, in 2000 6.4.

Tutume is situated in the northeastern part of Central District. It is about 120 km from Francistown, Botswana's second largest town. It belongs to Central District and is under the Bamangwato Tribal Territory. A minority tribe, the Bakalanga, constitute the majority of the inhabitants of Tutume village. During the colonial age the English preferred to educate the bakalanga and put them into administrative positions. The physical conditions for crop production are somewhat better than in most other parts of Botswana. The annual rainfall is 550mm on average. The rainfall is, however, as unpredictable and variable as in other parts of the country. Nevertheless, the more humid climate and better type of soil enable the peasants to grow a relatively wide range of crops. Most households cultivate sorghum, maize, millet, melon, beans and groundnuts.

Due to several factors the village has had an extraordinary population growth over the past 20 years. In 1981 the population size was 4083 in 1991 10070 and in 2001 it is projected to be around 18000 (DDP Central 1997). Decentralisation of the district administration is probably the main force behind this growth. Since 1980 the village was established as a Sub-District centre with all the administrative offices that go with the status, and social services have also been decentralised from Serowe. As a consequence of this, the village has received improvement in all types of physical infrastructure such as telephonenet, electricity, water supply, roads, schools and health. All this has created many local jobs. This again had made Tutume attractive for immigration. The natural increase must have been lower. Household size has decreased from 8.3 to 6.0 since 1980. Population growth in Tutume has obviously created a market for private enterprises in the service sector. The numbers of shops, restaurants, bars, petrol stations and hair saloons show this. There is less development in the manufacturing sector except for three small textile factories producing for the uniform markets of schools and churches. The public sector has also created a number of new jobs in the village by establishing a hospital;

more secondary schools and the extension of the sub-district headquarter. But lack of work is still a problem in the village.

### Standard of living

Poverty is severe in both villages (table 1). In Tutume 27 % and in Letlhakeng 46 % of the households are poor, according to this study. Compared to the national poverty level which is 28 %, households in Letlhakeng are poorer, household in Tutume less poor (BIDPA 1997). Being poor means that one does not have money to eat properly, and one can seldom serve a meal with meat. Being poor also means that one does not have shoes for the children, and the houses in the compound are few and in bad shape, which makes it difficult to keep warm and dry, and it means not having enough blankets to keep warm in the long and cold winter nights.

**Table 1: Standard of living. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 1976 - 2000. Percentage.**

| <b>Tutume</b>        |              |             |             |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
|                      | <b>1976*</b> | <b>1980</b> | <b>2000</b> |
| <b>Poor</b>          | 6            | 10          | 27          |
| <b>Middle-income</b> | 75           | 66          | 57          |
| <b>Rich</b>          | 19           | 24          | 16          |
| <b>Total</b>         | 100          | 100         | 100         |

| <b>Letlhakeng</b>    |              |             |             |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
|                      | <b>1976*</b> | <b>1980</b> | <b>2000</b> |
| <b>Poor</b>          | 30           | 40          | 46          |
| <b>Middle-income</b> | 57           | 46          | 45          |
| <b>Rich</b>          | 13           | 14          | 9           |
| <b>Total</b>         | 100          | 100         | 100         |

- *Based on data by Hesselberg and Dale 1977*

Categorising of households into social groups is in the present study is based on material items. Comparing the material situation of households in the two villages underline the main conclusion that the poverty is more

severe in Letlhakeng than in Tutume. If we look at a set of consumer items that the household either needs or at least it will give it status to have, the difference in material well being between the two villages is striking. Households in Tutume can afford to buy a number of consumer items, which households in Letlhakeng can not. For instance, whilst around 40 % in Tutume have managed to pay for the expenses of getting a standpipe in their yard, the figure for Letlhakeng is only 9 %. Carrying water from a distance is not something that a household would prefer to continue with if it could afford to get water into their yard. Thus, this indicator alone shows that the average household in Tutume is better off than the one in Letlhakeng. Indicators like shoes for all children, or how often they eat meat, confirm the findings; there are more poor households in Letlhakeng. The number of expensive consumer items like cars and television sets show the same tendency, they appear more frequently among households in Tutume than in Letlhakeng.

According to this study poverty has increased in both villages since 1980. In Tutume the percentage of households living in poverty has almost trippled, in Letlhakeng it has only been a slight increase. Already in 1980 the poverty situation was much more severe in Letlhakeng than in Tutume. This despite a general economic growth and a government policy geared at poverty alleviation and contrary to the common belief that poverty in Botswana has decreased. The unit of analysis, namely rural households, might be one explanation for the discrepancy between this findings and national results. As mention before, economic growth in Botswana is urban biased. This might have lead to a selective migration from rural areas. The households with more resources to succed have migrated to urban areas. Since independence there were great opportunities in urban areas for those with personal qualifications and economic resources to succeed. Migration is always a selective process; the most able-bodied and youngest are leaving first. Thus rural villages are left with a disproportionate number of resource-poor and elderly people. This process has mainly gained in a momentum after 1980. So even though national surveys find that poverty has decreased, it might still be true that rural poverty has increased. The latest report from Central District support this conclusion. The DDP V for Central District says that poverty continues to rise in the whole district as evidenced by the rising number of registered destitute. In Tutume there were 400 destitutes in 1989, in year 2000, 1362.

**Table 2: Inequality. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 1976 - 2000. Index-values for households.**

|                    | Tutume |      |      | Letlhakeng |      |      |
|--------------------|--------|------|------|------------|------|------|
|                    | 1976   | 1980 | 2000 | 1976       | 1980 | 2000 |
| <b>10% highest</b> | 25     | 38   | 28   | 27         | 27   | 9    |
| <b>25% lowest</b>  | -12    | -9   | -7   | -17        | -17  | -10  |
| <b>10% lowest</b>  | -15    | -12  | -9   | -18        | -18  | -11  |

Due to this process of selective migration it is not surprising to find that inequality has been reduced since 1980 (table 2). The main reason for the reduction in inequality is that the richest 10 % are less well off than in 1980. What has happened in the rural villages is probably that the richest households left for a more rewarding life in urban areas. This process might be called an *internal brain drain*, leaving the rural areas in stagnation.

**Table 3: Cattle ownership. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 1980 and 2000. Percentage .**

|                     | Tutume |      | Letlhakeng |      |
|---------------------|--------|------|------------|------|
|                     | 1980   | 2000 | 1980       | 2000 |
| <b>Less than 36</b> | 80     | 87   | 85         | 96   |
| <b>36-100</b>       | 16     | 11   | 11         | 3    |
| <b>100+</b>         | 4      | 2    | 4          | 1    |
| <b>Total</b>        | 100    | 100  | 100        | 100  |

The present study has no data on the migration process, however the speculation of outmigration of the richest households is substantiated by cattle figures. There are fewer households today than in 1980 that have a substantial large herd of cattle (table 3). Ownership of cattle is seen as a reliable single indicator of wealth in Botswana. That the number of larger cattle-owners is fewer today than twenty years ago supports the hypothesis that the richest household left the villages after 1980. This is a process that has gone further in Letlhakeng than in Tutume. One explanation might be the stagnation of the economy in that village.

## Livelihood strategies

Livelihood strategies as well as the rationale for applying a specific strategy differs depending on which social group a household belong to (Wikan 2000). Poor households are striving for survival. The poorest households are either not having any visible income source at all or they have one source of income only. A substantial proportion of the poor household make a living from subsistence agriculture, that means that they have hardly any money income. About 15% of the poorest households have a diversified income strategy. It is typical that they are getting an income by combining a number of low paid and unsecure local jobs. 60% of those with wage income are working as housemaids, watchman, gardener or farm labourer. The local character of wage income is another characteristic of the wage income of poor households. In Tutume 10 % and in Letlhakeng none of this type of household has external wage income.

The large number of households without any income have to rely on either family or government charity. Traditionally, the extended family was responsible for taking care of the household that could not manage to make a living on their own. Many commentators claim that due to the modernisation process and the urbanisation process this traditional safety net is starting to break down. It is thus interesting to note that respectively 62 % and 59 % of the poor households in Tutume and Letlhakeng say that they receive gifts like food and clothes from other households in the village. In rural areas it is obvious that the extended family is still taking responsibility for its poorest members.

**Table 4: Standard of living and livelihood strategy. 2000. Percentage.**

### Tutume

|                         | <b>Poor</b> | <b>Middle-income</b> | <b>Rich</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Agriculture only</b> | 27          | 15                   | 4           |
| <b>Wages only</b>       | 14          | 20                   | 16          |
| <b>Diverse income</b>   | 16          | 58                   | 80          |
| <b>No income</b>        | 43          | 7                    | -           |
| <b>Total</b>            | 100         | 100                  | 100         |



**Letlhakeng**

|                         | <b>Poor</b> | <b>Middle-income</b> | <b>Rich</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Agriculture only</b> | 24          | 22                   | 14          |
| <b>Wages only</b>       | 10          | 8                    | 14          |
| <b>Diverse income</b>   | 15          | 51                   | 70          |
| <b>No income</b>        | 51          | 17                   | -           |
| <b>Total</b>            | 100         | 100                  | 100         |

In addition to the private social safety net, the government has established programmes for destitute, for HIV-positive, for orphans and an old age pension. In years of crop failure the local councils operate a drought relief program, which is a food for work programme to help those most severely hit. In Tutume, 58 % of the poor households claim that they are receiving or have received support from the Government. The figure for Letlhakeng is 80 %. This shows that different social programmes of the Government are reaching the poorest. The assistance to the destitute is mostly food, but they also get clothing and blankets, candles, matches and soap, depending on their circumstances. Those who are admitted into the program are not employable due to infirmity or other disability. The destitute program aims at the individual rather than the whole household. At present the ordinary destitutes get 100 P/month, HIV/AIDS about 220 P and the old age pension is P110.

*The middle-income* households are typically working a diversification as their income strategy. A typical combination is subsistence crop production and wage income. Especially in Letlhakeng quite a few live on old age pensions. The wage-labour profile of this group of household differ from the poor household: 25 % are professionals the rest have stable work either in shops, as mechanics or clerical work in the public sector. In addition 1/3 are getting remittances from migrant members.

*The richt households* are the type of households, which diversify their resources most. The typical livelihood strategy is a combination of crop production and wage income. In Tutume 75 % of the wage earners in these household are professional. Also in Letlhakeng this group differs from the other groups because of the higher professional level of the wage earner. 40 % of these households have work, which demand educational background. One explanation for this might be the fact that for instance

land is still free in Botswana. They often have agriculture income both from crop production and cattle rearing. Cattle rearing are profitable because the cattle can graze on communal land. In the Botswana context a rich household with ample resources may accumulate wealth by harvesting both in the modern sector and the traditional sector. So, even though diversification of income sources is the most common livelihood strategy for both middle-income and rich households, rich households may profit most.

### **Household characteristics and standard of living**

Households that apply a diversified income strategy are in general better off than other households. The poor households are either without income sources or they live from subsistence crop production. An interesting question is if there are specific characteristics that are typical for poor households, which might explain their situation.

A household's productive capacity depends on labour, land and capital. In the Botswana context, land for crop production is communal and therefore not a household asset. However, owing to privatisation of boreholes and fences, land for cattle is private, although cattle actually are grazing on communal land. Draft power, that is cattle, was the most important capital asset up to the present time (Wikan 1993). Selolwane (1992) claims that draught power is the household asset that usually is scarcer and therefore restricts the accumulation process of the household. In addition, household's demographic characteristics and size are important for the household's productive capacity and thus the objective and outcome of its livelihood strategy.

Poor households have less educational resources than average in the village (table 5). In the labour market, especially outside the village, lack of education is a drawback. An educated person stands a better chance to get secure and well-paid work than an uneducated. As one consequence of the low educational level, the poor household seldom have income from migrant workers. Poor households are also smaller than the better-off households. One can see this as an indicator of households with inadequate labour resources, which makes it difficult for them to diversify their income

sources. In rural Botswana the household is both the unit of consumption and production. Thus, a large household with many members in working age may produce more than a small household (White 2002). Lack of cattle is a result of their poverty, but it also leads to poverty. In order to produce crops on free communal land one has to plough. Traditionally oxen, which most of the poor households do not have, is used. The result of lack of draft power is often that they discontinue own crop production.

**Table 5: HH resources and standard of living. Percentages. 2000.**

|                  | <b>Poor</b> |            | <b>Middle-income</b> |            | <b>Rich</b> |            |
|------------------|-------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|                  | Tutume      | Letlhakeng | Tutume               | Letlhakeng | Tutume      | Letlhakeng |
| <b>Size&lt;5</b> | 59          | 45         | 41                   | 33         | 42          | 14         |
| <b>Migrant</b>   | 8           | 13         | 35                   | 34         | 67          | 100        |
| <b>Cattle</b>    | 19          | 24         | 60                   | 53         | 83          | 86         |
| <b>Some edu.</b> | 73          | 25         | 93                   | 33         | 97          | 70         |

Many of the poor household are female-headed, that is a household without any grown up man. In Tutume 36 % and in Letlhakeng 71% of these households are poor. It is difficult to explain this only in a gender perspective because being a female-headed household is interlinked with being a small household, not having migrant income, not having cattle and low educational level. A female-headed household thus have few if any of the type of resources which a household need in order to diversify its income sources.

Households of orphans are a new and growing poverty group. Botswana is hard hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic; one of the results is an increasing number of orphans. According to a study conducted in 1999 there is an urgent need for support for orphans, they are living in absolute poverty and the extended family is not in a shape that make it possible for it to absorb these children (Fallow 1999). In September 2000, 1710 orphans were registered in Tutume.

Initial household assets are important for understanding the process of social differentiation in rural Botswana. The poor households do not have resources to utilise fully the fact that agricultural land is free and they do

not have resources to succeed in formal economic sector. They therefore become dependent on charity in order to survive. The richest households have resources to straddle in different economic sectors and in many types of income generating activities. They can utilise the right to land given them by their tribal rights and keep cattle and produce crops both for consumption and sale. In addition they can start local businesses like bottlestores and shop and they can take paid jobs. By spreading their resources into many different sector, the rich households are accumulation wealth.

### **Local contextual factors**

Diversifications of income sources seem at the present to be the best way to stay out of poverty in rural Botswana. The local context, with its history and culture, its natural environment, its local job market will always be a factor determining the development of a place. The two study villages differ when it comes to factors important for the households' options of choosing income strategies. Letlhakeng is situated in the outskirts of the Kalahari Desert where the conditions for cattle rearing are better than the conditions for arable farming. Tutume is more of an arable farming area, both because of climatic and cultural factors. Tutume is situated in an area with strong traditions for crop cultivation and with a climate that is somewhat more sympathetic to arable farming than Letlhakeng. So both the cultural factor and the climatic factor might explain why crop production is still so important in Tutume.

The local labour market is better in Tutume than in Letlhakeng. That means that more households can find a job. Even if this job is not well paid it makes an extra income and because it is a local job it is easy to combine with agricultural production. The local job market is much more difficult in Letlhakeng. Very few of the households had managed to find a job in the village.

Traditionally men from Letlhakeng went to South Africa to work in the mines. In the mines they did not need any education. Today most of the mine migrants are sent home. South Africa wills mainly employ own workers in the mines. But because of the low educational level among this

laid off workers they have difficulties on the urban job market in Botswana. The bakalangs in Tutume have a long tradition of educating their children. Being a minority group it was important for them in order to get into civil service during the colonial age. It is therefore common knowledge that even today they sit on a disproportional large part of good jobs in the country.

So, the two villages differ when it comes to factors that might be of importance for the standard of living in the village. Tutume offers its households a better chance for farming and formal work than Letlhakeng does. Why this is so has, as shown, both historical and environmental explanations.

## **Conclusion**

The poverty situation is severe in both villages. And it is worse now than twenty years ago. The diamond lead growth has created too few jobs to upsurge the growing numbers of jobseekers. The growth is also urban biased; the rural economy and thus the rural areas have not developed economically. Lack of modernisation of agricultural production and lack of development of alternative job opportunities in rural areas has resulted in rural stagnation. The selective migration process left rural areas with a skewed population distribution both when it comes to age, qualifications and economic resources. However, rural villages are not homogenous groups. There are villages like Tutume that are local growth poles and hence have a better local labour market than others. It is this type of villages that in general have a higher standard of living than other more stagnating rural villages. The situation today is that few households make a living in traditional agriculture and few households live solely from wage income. Most households have to have several income sources in order to make a living. A larger local labour market makes it easier for households to combine local work with farming. However, household resources like income, size and qualifications are factors determining its livelihood strategy and hence its standard of living. Households without resources to diversify their income sources become poor.

## References

- BIDPA. 1997. Study of Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in Botswana. Government Printer, Gaborone.
- Dale, R & J. Hesselberg. 1977. Interaction and integration: A study of two rural communities in Botswana. Department of Geography, University of Oslo.
- DDP V Central. 1997. District Development Plan Central. Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Gaborone.
- Edge, W. A. 1998. Botswana: A developmental state. In Edge & Lekorwe. Botswana. Politics and Society. J.L. van Schaik. Academic, Pretoria.
- Good, K. 1993. At the ends of the ladder: Radical inequalities in Botswana. *The journal of Modern African Studies*, 31, 2.
- Harvey, C. 1995. Is the economic miracle over? *Journal of African Economics*, vol 1, no.3.
- Hesselberg, J. 1984. A method of level of living analysis in the Third World. *Norsk geografisk tidsskrift*. 38, 37–42.
- Hesselberg, J. 1985. *The Third World in Transition*. Nordiska Afrika-instituttet, Uppsala.
- Hope, K. L. 1996. Growth, unemployment and poverty in Botswana. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 14,1
- Household Income and Expenditure Survey. 1994. Gaborone.
- Hudson, D. J & M. Wright. 1996. *Income Distribution in Botswana: Trends in Inequality since Independence*. Nonpublished paper.
- Jefferis, K. 1996. Poverty in Botswana. In Salkin et. al. *Aspects of the Botswana Economy. Selected Papers*. James Currey Publisher, Oxford.
- Mazonde, I. 1996. *Poverty in Botswana and its impact of the quality of life*. Botswana Society, Gaborone.
- NDP 8. 2001. *National Development Plane 8*. Government Printer, Gaborone.
- Selolwane, O. 1992. *Labour Allocation and Household income strategies in Western Ngamiland, Botswana. Implications for agricultural development*. PH.D. Thesis, Univeristy of East Anglia, Norwich.

- Smith, D.M. 1979. Where the grass is greener. Living in an unequal world. Pelican books.
- Valentine, T. R. 1993. Mineral-led Economic Growths, Drought Relief, and Income Policy: Income Distribution in Botswana Reconsidered. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol.52, No.1
- Wikan, G. 1981a. Arbeidsvandring og åkerbruk i Botswana. Geografisk institutt, Oslo
- Wikan, G. 1981b. Absenteeism, crop cultivation and level of living in Rural Botswana. Department of Geography, University of Oslo.
- Wikan, G. 1982a. The impact of absenteeism on crop production and standard of living in two villages in Botswana, *Botswana Notes and Records*, 13.
- Wikan, G. 1982b. Absenteeism; Crop Cultivation and Standard of Living in Developing Countries. *GeoJournal* 6.6
- Wikan, G. 1993. Det splittede hushold. Multiaktivitet og by-land bånd i Botswana. Østlandsforskning, Lillehammer
- Wikan, G. 1999a. Varer diamanter evig? En analyse av Botswanas økonomiske utvikling. I Imerslund (red.) *Krysspeilinger*. Høgskolen i Hedmark, Hamar.
- Wikan, G. 1999b. Unequal development: The case of Botswana. Occasional paper nr. 23. Høgskolen i Hedmark.
- Wikan, G. 2000. Cash, crops and cattle. A study of rural livelihoods in Botswana. Høgskolen i Hedmark, Rapport nr. 7.
- World Bank. 2002. *World Development Report*. New York.
- White, H. (2002). Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in Poverty Analysis. *World Development* Vol 30, 3.





# **Poverty and Inequality in Rural Botswana**

## **Introduction**

Today, Botswana is classified as an upper-middle income country and is one of the three richest countries in Africa (World Bank 1998). It has in fact been the world's fastest growing economy since its independence (Harvey 1995.) The average annual growth in real terms, during the entire post-independence period was about 13 % (Hope 1996). This impressive economic growth is mainly due to diamonds. After independence rich diamond fields were discovered and the country is at the moment the world's second largest producer of diamonds. In addition to diamonds, the cattle sector has contributed to economic growth. There was a significant expansion of the national cattle stock and of beef exports in response to the favourable export prices, well above world market prices, offered by the European Union. But still, diamonds are the single most important commodity. Diamond exports account for about 80 % of export earnings, copper-nickel and meat products for 9 % (Hope 1996). Botswana's geopolitical situation in combination with a liberal western-orientated government must also be regarded as positive factors in the country's economic success. Situated in the middle of Southern Africa, with neighbours that included apartheid South Africa, communist Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola and socialist Zambia, Botswana became a favourite for western aid donors. Other commentators also point to the good development management of the Botswana government as a major reason behind the stable and remarkable economic growth up to the beginning of the 1990s (Hope 1995). As a result of the excellent economic

growth and overseas aid, the Government of Botswana was to develop both a physical and social infrastructure (Harvey 1995). Hence, most human capability indicators on health and education show impressive figures in an African context. According to Harvey (1995), there are equally impressive statistics showing progress in the physical infrastructure, such as roads and water supplies.

However, despite Botswana's rapid economic growth and social gains, there are growing concerns about the lack of spread-effect. Twenty years of high economic growth and good governance have not solved the problems of unequal development and poverty. The mineral-based economy is not able to distribute the wealth by creating enough jobs in the formal sector, and at the same time the rural economy is not being developed. Thus rural-urban migration, poverty and unemployment are problems in Botswana as well as in other African countries.

In this paper I will address the question of rural inequality and poverty. Based on case studies from 1980 and 2000, I will examine to what extent the national economic growth has resulted in a higher standard of living for rural households (Wikan 1981, Wikan 2000).

### **Poverty amidst plenty**

Whether the development process, which has brought Botswana to the position of one of the most prosperous countries in Africa, has led to a generally better standard of living and a reduction in the number of poor households is a key question in the development debate in Botswana (Curry 1987, Hope & Edge 196, Hudson & Wright 1996, Jefferies 1997, Valentine 1993). Most researchers conclude that living conditions have generally improved but that poverty is still a major problem in Botswana, especially *rural poverty*. Studies made by the Ministry of Finance conclude that 47 % of the people and 38 % of the households were living in poverty in 1993. The proportion of poor was higher in rural than in urban areas. 33% were poor in rural areas; the figure for urban areas was only 7 % (BIDPA 1997).

According to this report, based on an analysis of Household Income and Expenditure surveys from 1985/86 and 1993/94, poverty has been reduced both in absolute and in relative numbers. This has also been confirmed by several case-studies (Valentine 1993, Hudson&Wright 1996). Valentine in addition makes an important point when he writes that as family ties are still strong, committing members to taking care of each other, household members who make their living in the rural areas benefit from growth in the formal urban economy. Household members who are in paid employment still send money home to the household in the country. For this reason, Valentine concludes that the existence of this reciprocal responsibility contributes to spreading the positive effects of the economic development to more people than those who benefit directly from paid employment. This conclusion is supported by Hudson and Wright (1996), who claim to have found a general improvement in living conditions among households in Botswana, although they add that there are households which have not managed to participate in the overall growth and do not fit in with the general picture.

Edge, however, finds evidence to indicate that the number of Botswana households living below the poverty line (PDL) is growing, especially rural poverty (Edge 1998). There are reports that the poverty situation is becoming worse in the bigger towns too. For instance, in a study conducted in 1993 researchers found about 500 street children in the capital Gaborone (Cambell and Ntsabane 1997).

Hence, the poverty debate is somewhat non-conclusive; some claim that poverty has decreased while others claim that it has increased. But they all agree that poverty is still a severe problem in Botswana, especially rural poverty. In addition Botswana is a very unequal country to live in. The Income Inequality Index was published by the UN in their yearly report and showed that Botswana had the highest degree of income inequalities among the countries of the world for which statistics were available (UNDP 1994). According to Good 1993 there are indicators that income distribution in Botswana is changing in favour of the rich, further increasing the income gap between the rich and poor. Major surveys of household income and expenditure were conducted in 1973, 1986 and 1994. The first two studies showed that rural income distribution had become more skewed. The Gini coefficient rose from 0.52 in 1973 to 0.55

in 1986 (Harvey 1993). If we look at the figures for 1994 it shows a Gini coefficient of 0.54, a slightly more equal income distribution than in 1986. However one must consider how income is defined; income includes income in cash and income in kind. If one only looks at cash income, Botswana shows a Gini coefficient of 0.74 (HIES 1994). It is however difficult to compare the figures because different definitions of income were used. Thus, simply comparing the Gini coefficient from the three studies does not answer the question of whether inequality is increasing.

*Income inequalities follow an urban- rural division.* According to the HIES 1985/86 urban households earned twice as much as rural households and in 1989 the urban household earned on average three times the income of a rural household (Hope 1996). Urbanisation seems at the same time to be linked to the reduction of poverty on the national level and to the increase of inequalities at a national level. The Gaborone-area and the other urban areas have fewer poor people than the rest of the country. At the same time figures from for instance Central and North East districts shows an increasing poverty rate. This region is larger and has more poor people than any other region Thus there are reasons to believe that the regional differences in income are increasing (Siwawa-Nadi 1996). *Some people and some locations have benefited more.* Mazonde 1996 argues along the same line when he says that in 1994 the annual income received by the poorest 10 % was lower than in 1975 and that 75 % of rural households had an income below the mean average income.

### **A re-study of two rural villages**

This paper is based on a re-study of the rural villages Tutume and Letlhakeng. As mentioned, the aim of the re-study is to examine to what extent the general development process in Botswana has manifested itself in at better standard of living for rural households. By studying the process over 20 years in two different villages I will also show how local contextual factors as well as household resources affect household's general level of welfare.

The data was gathered in formal households interviews. 320 interviews were made in 1980, and 382 in 2000. In addition to the quantitative data,

15 in-depth interviews were carried out this time. These households were chosen to show various typical forms of livelihood strategies. The *household* is a difficult concept to define in the Botswana context. It is the unit principally responsible for agricultural production. It is also a unit of consumption whose income derives from various sources. The members of the household are therefore often strewn across dispersed geographical locations in pursuit of the various incomes. The household is thus rarely a complete and precise entity where residence, production and consumption neatly coincide (Selolwane 1992). This disjuncture creates some methodological problems in the study and analysis of the rural households. In the present survey I have made the following operational definition of a household; a household consists of a person or group of persons who claim to belong to a single compound and who use part of the available resources in common. They are in addition answerable to the same head. Unmarried members staying elsewhere are included when the respondents include them and when they send or bring home money and/or goods to the rural home.

In principle the same questionnaire was used in both surveys. Some adjustments had, however, to be made given the changes due to the time span between the two surveys. The standard of living of a household was measured by a composite standard of living index based on material items. To base an index on material indicators is a simple way of grouping households into standard of living groups. The selection of indicators is crucial for arriving at meaningful social groups (Hesselberg 1984 ) The indicators have been selected among items in general demand in the study areas. The selected indicators should reflect the economic and social situation and changes in this situation. The usefulness of the indicators has been shown in several studies (Dale and Hesselberg 1977, Wikan 1982, Hesselberg 1985). The indicators were of four types: Cheap and necessary like water buckets and blankets, middle-priced like sledge, axe, table, chair, expensive and necessary like plough and bed and expensive but not necessary like radio and watch. The households were categorized into three standard of living groups depending on the score they made on the index. The poor households were the households with scores under -5, the middle-income households had scores under 9 and the rich households over 9. The scores, however, do not tell much about what it means to belong to a certain group. But if a household is *poor* it means that it seldom

has meat on the table, it has no bed, only one proper chair, not enough blankets to keep all members warm. Its house is also in bad condition as well as the whole compound. To be a *rich* household means that there are plenty of beds and blankets and chairs. It has often a car; television, fridge and they all have radios. Most rich households have standpipes in their compounds and electricity in their houses. Their houses are made of bricks and of very high standard<sup>1</sup>. In the year 2000 survey I had to change some few indicators because of the changes that have taken place in Botswana since 1980. Radio and watch were not good indicators for something expensive and unnecessary any more. In Botswana year 2000 television and fridge are better indicators. I do not think that this has made comparison in standard of living over a period of time problematic. The items, which are typical for the poor household, are the same as in 1980. This makes it possible to compare poverty in 1980 and 2000.

The study villages, Tutume and Letlhakeng are typical Botswana villages with a range of different types of households. The two villages are situated in different ecological zones, their inhabitants belong to different ethnic groups and they are at different distance from the most important labour market – the capital. Today Tutume is three times as big as Letlhakeng. Thus, comparing the villages might give an insight into how the local context influences the household's standard of living.

The general development in Botswana during the last twenty years is manifested differently in the two study villages. Letlhakeng has stagnated while Tutume has grown. In both villages, however, the lack of development in local agriculture and the local labour market have resulted in a problematic situation for many households.

I asked how the local people view the situation for their village, by asking them to name the main village problem (table 1). People in Letlhakeng are more worried about the lack of jobs and poverty than in Tutume where health problems are the one most often mention. Asking people about their own main problem gives the following result: in Letlhakeng 75 % say it is

---

<sup>1</sup> See Smith, D. M 1979. *Where the Grass is Greener*. Pelican Books for a detailed description of the index.

lack of work and lack of money, in Tutume less than 50 % claim that lack of work and lack of money are their main household problem.

**Table 1: Main problems in the village. 2000. Percentage.**

|                         | <b>Tutume</b> | <b>Letlhakeng</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Lack of jobs</b>     | 39            | 57                |
| <b>Health situation</b> | 50            | 16                |
| <b>Poverty</b>          | 11            | 27                |

The more severe situation for many households in Letlhakeng is also underlined by the fact that 80 % of the households received some kind of social assistance; the figure for Tutume is 25 %. Periodic crop failure is more common in Letlhakeng, which is shown by the fact that 60 % of the households claim they have received or are receiving money under the drought relief programme; the figure for Tutume is only 15 %. When it comes to who received support under some of the many income generating programmes, a comparison between the two villages shows the following: in Letlhakeng only 26 % had received support; the figure for Tutume was 50 %. This might indicate that households in Tutume are more willing to invest in local income-generating production. Willingness to invest money is often seen as an indicator of optimism and resource-richness. A higher degree of acceptance of investment programmes might show that households in Tutume compared to those in Letlhakeng have resources above the minimum and are therefore able to make long-term plans.

### **Poverty and inequality in Tutume and Letlhakeng**

*The main conclusion is that poverty in both Tutume and Letlhakeng has increased since 1980.* This seems to be contrary to the general view that poverty in Botswana has decreased - also rural poverty. In Tutume there are 27 % of the households that fall in the poverty group that is an increase from 10 % in 1980. The corresponding figures for Letlhakeng are 40 % and 46 %.

**Table 2: Standard of living. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 1976 - 2000. Percentage.****Tutume**

|                      | <b>1980</b> | <b>2000</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Poor</b>          | 10          | 27          |
| <b>Middle-income</b> | 66          | 57          |
| <b>Rich</b>          | 24          | 26          |
| <b>Total</b>         | 100         | 100         |

**Letlhakeng**

|                      | <b>1980</b> | <b>2000</b> |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Poor</b>          | 40          | 46          |
| <b>Middle-income</b> | 46          | 45          |
| <b>Rich</b>          | 14          | 9           |
| <b>Total</b>         | 100         | 100         |

The poorest of the poor households are those without any source of income, this is the *absolute poor*. By no source of income is meant that the household have no paid income, no private business, no cattle and do not cultivate the fields. Around 1980, there were few households without any source of income in Tutume but in Letlhakeng 21 % of the households had no income. In the year 2000 the situation has developed negatively, 12 % and 34 % of the households in Tutume and Letlhakeng respectively were defined as absolute poor

**Table 3: Absolute poor households. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 1976-2000. Percentage.**

|                         | <b>Tutume</b> |      | <b>Letlhakeng</b> |      |
|-------------------------|---------------|------|-------------------|------|
|                         | 1980          | 2000 | 1980              | 2000 |
| <b>Absolute poor hh</b> | 1             | 12   | 21                | 34   |

Traditionally, the extended family was responsible for taking care of the household that could not manage to make a living on its own. Many commentators claim that due to the modernisation process and the urbanisation process this traditional safety net is starting to break down. It is thus interesting to note that respectively 62 % and 59 % of the poor



households in Tutume and Letlhakeng say that they receive gifts like food and clothes from other households in the village. In rural areas it is obvious that the extended family is still taking responsibility for its poorest members.

In addition to the private social safety net, the Government has established programmes for destitute (absolute poor), for HIV-positive, for orphans and an old age pension. In years of crop failure the local councils operate a drought relief program, which is a food for work programme to help those most severely hit. The assistance given to the absolute poor is mostly food, but they also get clothing and blankets, candles, matches and soap, depending on their circumstances.

The poverty situation differs between the two study-villages. If we look at a set of consumer items that the household either needs or at least it will give it status to have, the difference in material well being between the two villages is striking (table 4). Households in Tutume can afford to buy a number of consumer items, which households in Letlhakeng cannot. For instance, whilst around 40 % in Tutume have managed to pay for the expenses of getting a standpipe in their yard, the figure for Letlhakeng is only 9 %. Carrying water from a distance is not something that a household would prefer to continue with if it could afford to get water into their yard. Thus, this indicator alone shows that the average household in Tutume is better off than the one in Letlhakeng. Indicators like shoes for all children, or how often they eat meat, confirm the findings; there are more poor households in Letlhakeng. The number of expensive consumer items like cars and television sets show the same tendency, they appear more frequently among households in Tutume than in Letlhakeng. The conclusion is thus that there are more rich households in Tutume.

Who are the poor? In Tutume almost 70 % of the absolute poor are households where the head of household is old; the figure for Letlhakeng is around 50 %. Many of the so-called retired are getting old age pensions. This pension of P110 is, however, too small to keep them out of poverty. The situation might in a long-term perspective be more serious for the younger households, especially if they do not have resources such as an education that makes them employable on the formal labour market either locally or in urban areas.

**Table 4: Ownership of selected consumer items. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 2000. Percentage.**

|                               | <b>Tutume</b> | <b>Letlhakeng</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| <b>Standpipe</b>              | 42            | 9                 |
| <b>Shoes for all children</b> | 71            | 30                |
| <b>Meat every day</b>         | 16            | 4                 |
| <b>Bed</b>                    | 91            | 70                |
| <b>Radio</b>                  | 88            | 45                |
| <b>TV</b>                     | 12            | 6                 |
| <b>Car</b>                    | 13            | 6                 |

The data shows that poor households have less educational resources than average in the village. *The poor household is also smaller than the better-off household.* This is the same as we found in 1980 and it is the same for both villages. One can see this as an indicator of households with inadequate labour resources, which makes it difficult for them to take part in a multi-income labour strategy and which therefore makes them poorer. The result, however, is contrary to what Jefferies (1996) finds. He claims that the largest households are the poorest. Female-headed households are also among the poorest. In both Tutume and Letlhakeng this group of households are poorer than other households in the villages (table 5).

**Table 5: Real head of household and standard of living. Tutume and Letlhakeng. 2000. Percentage.**

|                      | <b>Tutume</b> |               |      | <b>Letlhakeng</b> |               |      |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|------|-------------------|---------------|------|
|                      | Poor          | Middle-income | Rich | Poor              | Middle-income | Rich |
| <b>De jure FHH</b>   | 36            | 56            | 9    | 71                | 27            | 1    |
| <b>De facto FHH*</b> | 4             | 61            | 35   | 0                 | 67            | 33   |
| <b>Male HH</b>       | 28            | 56            | 16   | 32                | 57            | 11   |

\*de facto fhh is a household where the male head is a migrant and with no other grown-up male at home

Orphans are a new and growing poverty group. Botswana is hard hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic; one of the results is an increasing number of orphans.

According to a study conducted in 1999 there is an urgent need for support for orphans; they are living in absolute poverty and the extended family is not in a position that make it possible for it to absorb these children (Fallow 1999). In September 2000, 1710 orphans were registered in Tutume. The DDP V for Central District says that poverty continues to rise in the whole district as evidenced by the rising number of registered destitute. In Tutume there were 400 destitute in 1989, compared with 1362 in 2000.

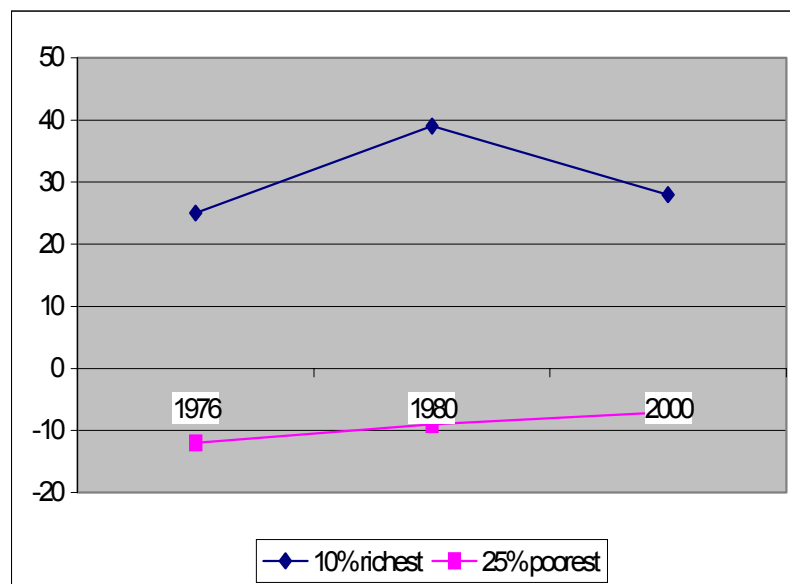
*The poor households* either do not have any visible income source at all or they have only one source of income. Only about 15% of the poor households have diversified their resources. The type of wage income they are engaged in is mostly insecure and low paid. 60% are working as housemaids, watchmen, gardeners or farm labourers. The local character of wage income is another characteristic of the wage income of poor households. In Tutume 10 % and in Letlhakeng none of this type of household has external wage income. *The middle-income* households are typically working a multi-income strategy whose main combination is crop production and wage income. Some of these households also live either from wages or from crop production. Especially in Letlhakeng quite a few live on old age pensions. The wage-labour profile of this group of household differs from the poor household: 25 % are professionals whereas the rest have stable work either in shops, as mechanics or clerical work in the public sector. *The rich households* are the type of households, which diversify their resources most. As with the other group the typical livelihood strategy is a combination of crop production and wage income. In Tutume 75 % of the wage earners in these households are professional in fields where they need a certificate to have the job. Also in Letlhakeng this group differs from the other groups because of the higher professional level of the wage earner. 40 % of these households have work which demand an educational background.

*In conclusion*; the relative number of poor households has increased in both villages. This is not what was expected given other reports based on national surveys. The poverty situation in Tutume is somewhat better than the national average; in Letlhakeng it is worse. The characteristics of poor households are in accordance with other findings; they are the elderly, less educated and more female-headed households. I do not; however find

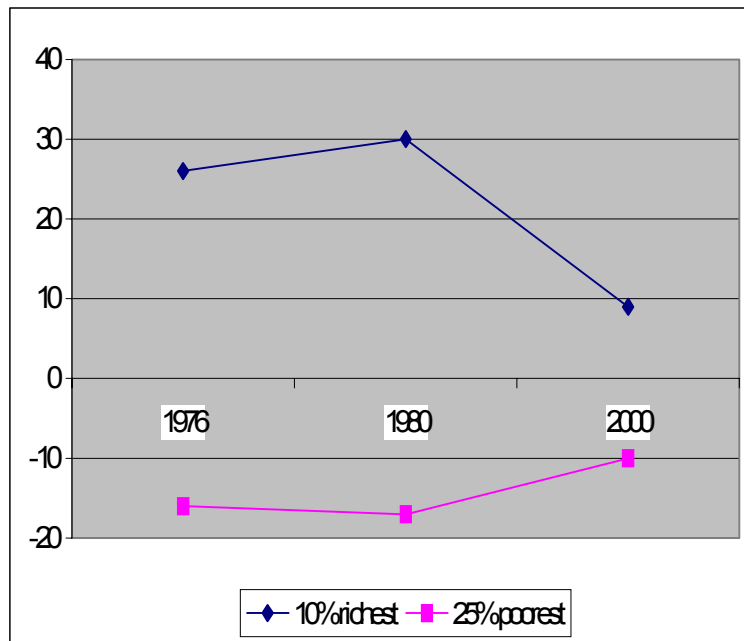
support for the hypothesis that larger households are less well off than the smaller households. It might not be the size of the household only but also the age and sex composition that is important for the standard of living. On one hand a larger household has more members to feed and thereby need a larger income. On the other hand a larger household has more members to work and thereby might get a larger income. The size and composition of a household varies throughout its life cycle. There might therefore be a correlation between life cycle and poverty, but the data from the present survey does not make it possible to address this question.

The *inequality in standard of living among households has been reduced since 1980* (fig.1 and .2). The main reason for the reduction in inequality is that the richest 10 % are less well off than in 1980. What has happened in the rural villages is probably that the richest households left for higher income and the bright lights in urban areas. Since Independence there were great opportunities to succeed in urban areas for those with personal qualifications and economic resources. Migration is always a selective process; the most able-bodied and youngest are leaving first. Thus rural villages are left with a disproportionate number of resource-poor and elderly people. This process has mainly gained momentum after 1980 owing to the increased job and educational opportunities in urban areas since 1980. This process might be called an *internal brain drain*, leaving the rural areas in stagnation.

**Figure 1: Standard of living 1976.1980.2000. Tutume Index values.**



**Figure 2: Standard of living 1976.1980.2000. Letlhakeng. Index.**



One can see that poor households in Letlhakeng are poorer than the poor households in Tutume. At the same time inequality in standard of living is smaller in Letlhakeng than in Tutume. In Letlhakeng the material situation for the 25 % poorest is, however, better now than in 1980. Rich households are less rich than before. There are fewer households today than in 1980 that have a large herd of cattle. Ownership of cattle is seen as a reliable single indicator of wealth in Botswana. That the number of larger cattle-owners is fewer today than twenty years ago supports the hypothesis that the richest household left the villages after 1980. This is a process that has gone further in Letlhakeng than in Tutume. One explanation might be the stagnation of the economy in that village.

## Conclusion

The imbalance in regional and social growth has led to increased rural poverty in Tutume and Letlhakeng. This is contrary to the common view that poverty is severe but decreasing. It is especially women, the aged, and those without personal resources who are left out of the general improvement in the standard of living in the village. The situation is especially difficult in Letlhakeng, a village with a stagnating economy. One might ask if its closeness to the Gaborone growth area might be a

drawback for development of the village. The backwash effects of the centre – drawing capital and labour from the village, hit Letlhakeng. The skewed regional development with most of the activities and work being situated in urban areas is probably one factor behind the quite sharp reduction in inequality in both villages. The selective migration process left rural areas with a skewed population distribution both when it comes to age, resources and qualifications. This is more prominent in Letlhakeng than in Tutume. Tutume has prospered for a long time owing to its status as a sub-centre in Central District creating public jobs, which with its multiplier effect led to jobs in the private sector as well. Thus there are many local jobs in the village.

The development process in Botswana has led to poverty and plenty. The households with resources to succeed in a modern economy have increased their standard of living considerably over the last twenty years. In rural areas they are the few. The households with small resources become marginalized and proletarianized and live from handouts from the state or relatives. This is an increasing group in rural areas.

## References

- BIDPA.1997. Study of Poverty and Poverty alleviation in Botswana. Government Printer, Gaborone.
- Cambell, Erik and Ntsabane,T. 1997. "Street children in Botswana: A case Study in Gaborone". Social Development Issues, vol. 19 ,2/3.
- Curry, R.L. 1987. "Poverty and Mass Unemployment in Mineral-rich Botswana." American Journal of Economics and sociology, vol. 46.
- Dale, R & J. Hesselberg. 1977. Interaction and integration: A study of two rural communities in Botswana. Department of Geography, University of Oslo.
- DDP Central. 1997. District Development Plan Central. Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Gaborone.
- Edge, W.A. 1998. Botswana: A developmental state. In Edge &Lekorwe. Botswana. Politics and Society. J.L. van Schaik. Academic, Pretoria.

- Good, K. 1993. "At the ends of the ladder: Radical inequalities in Botswana." *The journal of Modern African Studies*, 31, 2
- Harvey, C. 1992. "Is the economic miracle over?" *Journal of African Economics*, vol 1, no.3.
- Hesselberg, J. 1984. "A method of level of living analysis in the Third World." *Norsk geografisk tidsskrift*. 38, 37–42.
- Hesselberg, J. 1985. *The Third World in Transition*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala.
- Hope, K.L. 1996. "Growth, unemployment and poverty in Botswana." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 14, 1.
- Hope, K.L and Edge, W.E. 1996. "Growth with Uneven Development: Urban-rural socio-economic disparities in Botswana." *Geoforum*, Vol 27.
- Hudson, D.J & M. Wright. 1996. *Income Distribution in Botswana: Trends in Inequality since Independence*. Nonpublished paper.
- Jefferis, K. 1997. *Poverty in Botswana*. In Salkin et. al. *Aspects of the Botswana Economy. Selected Papers*. James Currey Publisher, Oxford.
- Mazonde, I. 1996. *Poverty in Botswana and its impact of the quality of life*. Botswana society, Gaborone.
- Selolwane, O. 1992. *Labour Allocation and Household income strategies in Western Ngamiland, Botswana. Implications for agricultural development*. PH.D. Thesis, Univeristy of East Anglia, Norwich.
- Siwawa-Ndai. P. 1996. *Some facts and figures about quality of life in Botswana*. Botswana Society, Gaborone.
- Smith, D.M. 1979. *Where the grass is greener. Living in an unequal world*. Pelican books.
- Valentine, T.R. 1993. "Mineral-led Economic Growth, Drought Relief, and Income Policy: Income Distribution in Botswana Reconsidered." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol.52, No.1.
- Wikan, G. 1981a. *Arbeidsvandring og åkerbruk i Botswana*. Geografisk institutt, Oslo.
- Wikan, G. 1981b. *Absenteeism, crop cultivation and level of living in Rural Botswana*. Department of Geography, University of Oslo.

- Wikan, G. 1982. "The impact of absenteeism on crop production and standard of living in two villages in Botswana", Botswana Notes and Records, 13.
- Wikan, G. 1982. "Absenteeism; Crop Cultivation and Standard of Living in Developing Countries". *GeoJournal* 6.6.
- Wikan, G. 1993. Det splittede hushold. Multiaktivitet og by-land bånd i Botswana. Østlandsforskning, Lillehammer
- Wikan, G. 1999 a. Varer diamanter evig? En analyse av Botswanas økonomiske utvikling. I Imerslund (red.) *Krysspeilinger*. Høgskolen i Hedmark, Hamar.
- Wikan, G. 1999b. Unequal development: The case of Botswana. Occasional paper nr. 23. Høgskolen I Hedmark.
- World Bank. 1998. *World Development Report*



# **A Study of Rural Livelihoods in Botswana**

## **Introduction**

*Poverty amidst plenty* is an often-used slogan to describe the present state of development in Botswana. The slogan indicates that the very impressive economic growth the last twenty years, has not yet reached all social groups. Uneven development, as exhibited by rising unemployment, persistent poverty and grave income inequalities is still a serious problem in Botswana (BIDPA 197, Curry 1987, Datta 1995, Edge 1998). The rural areas and the rural households are among the most disadvantaged in this, in African context, rich country (Datta 1995, Jefferies 1997, Selolwane 1992). In this context of unequal development, this paper presents the livelihood strategies of the rural households in Botswana and discusses the reasons for households to adopt a certain livelihood strategy.

Livelihood strategy is a complex concept. In the present study I will restrict the concept to the economic component. I will describe and analyse the income strategies of the rural households. By income is meant both income in cash and in-kind. The composition and size of rural households incomes is difficult to research. There is variation in income from year to year and it is seasonal variation. There are also the problems of reliability due to the problem of recalling. I will therefore only present the *composition* of rural households income sources. Even though this study does not give a comprehensive description of the household's livelihood situation, I still think I will give some valuable information to the more

general debate on livelihood strategies. Especially since the present study is based on data over a time-span of twenty years.

A lot has been written on diversification of income as the livelihood strategy for rural households (Ellis 2000, 1998, Francis 2000). Studies from many different locations seem to agree that diversification is a very important livelihood strategy for rural households (Abdulai & CroleRees 2001, Orr 2001, Reardon 1997). The debate is on the rural households *motive* for choosing this strategy (Barrett 2001, Jørgensen 2001). Most researchers see this strategy as poverty *or survival strategy*. That is; income diversification or multi-income is a strategy forced upon a household out of necessity (Baker 1995, Potts 1995, Roth 1996). Roth 1996, for instance, studied nomads in the northern part of Kenya, where she finds that it is the poorest households which often have paid work in addition to income from farming. Consequently, she sees this as a survival strategy. Baker 1995 also finds that diversification is particularly widespread among households with little access to land. It is often they who combine farming with paid income. Other researchers interpret diversification as a *means of minimising the risks* (Dahlberg & Blakie 1996, Jefferies 1996). A study made in northern Botswana finds that a large number of households have waged work in addition to farming as a strategy for *minimising the risks* (Dahlberg 1995). Others again see diversification as an *accumulation strategy* (Abdulai & CroleRees 2002, Bebbington 1999, Ellis 1998).

In this article, I will argue that there are different motives for diversification depending on household specific factors as well as the national and local context. I will document that the strategy may be associated with success as well as with livelihood distress. I will show how the motive for diversification in the two study villages, depends on household specific characteristics. In the village there will be some households that struggle for *survival*, some for *security* and some for *accumulation*. Furthermore I will show that for a group of households, the poorest, diversification is not an option, due to lack of resources.

## **The study areas 1980 and 2000**

The data presented in this article are based on two studies; the first one was made in 1980 (Wikan 1982, Wikan 1981 )and the second one in 2000. Thus this study is one of the few that presents data that are comparable across time. The data was gathered by formal households interviews, altogether 320 interviews were made in 1980, in 2000 382. In addition to the quantitative data, 15 in-depth interviews were carried out in 2000. These households were chosen to show various typical forms of livelihood strategies.

The *household* is a difficult concept to define in the Botswana context. The household in rural Botswana is the unit principally responsible for agricultural production. It is also a unit of consumption whose income derives from various sources. The members of the household are therefore often strewn across dispersed geographical locations in pursuit of the various incomes. The household is thus rarely a complete and precise entity where residence, production and consumption neatly coincide (Selolwane 1992). This disjuncture creates some methodological problems in the study and analysis of the rural households' income strategies. In the present survey I have made the following operational definition of a household; a household consists of a person or group of persons who claim to belong to a single compound and who use part of the available resources in common. They are in addition answerable to the same head. Unmarried members staying elsewhere are included when the respondents include them and when they send or bring home money and/or goods to the rural home.

The same questionnaire was used in both studies. However, I had to make some adjustments given the changes due to the time span between the two surveys. The standard of living of a household was measured by a composite standard of living index based on material items (Smith 1979). In the 2000-year survey I had to add items like television and fridge in order to cash indicators of wealth. I do not think that this has made comparison in standard of living in time problematic.

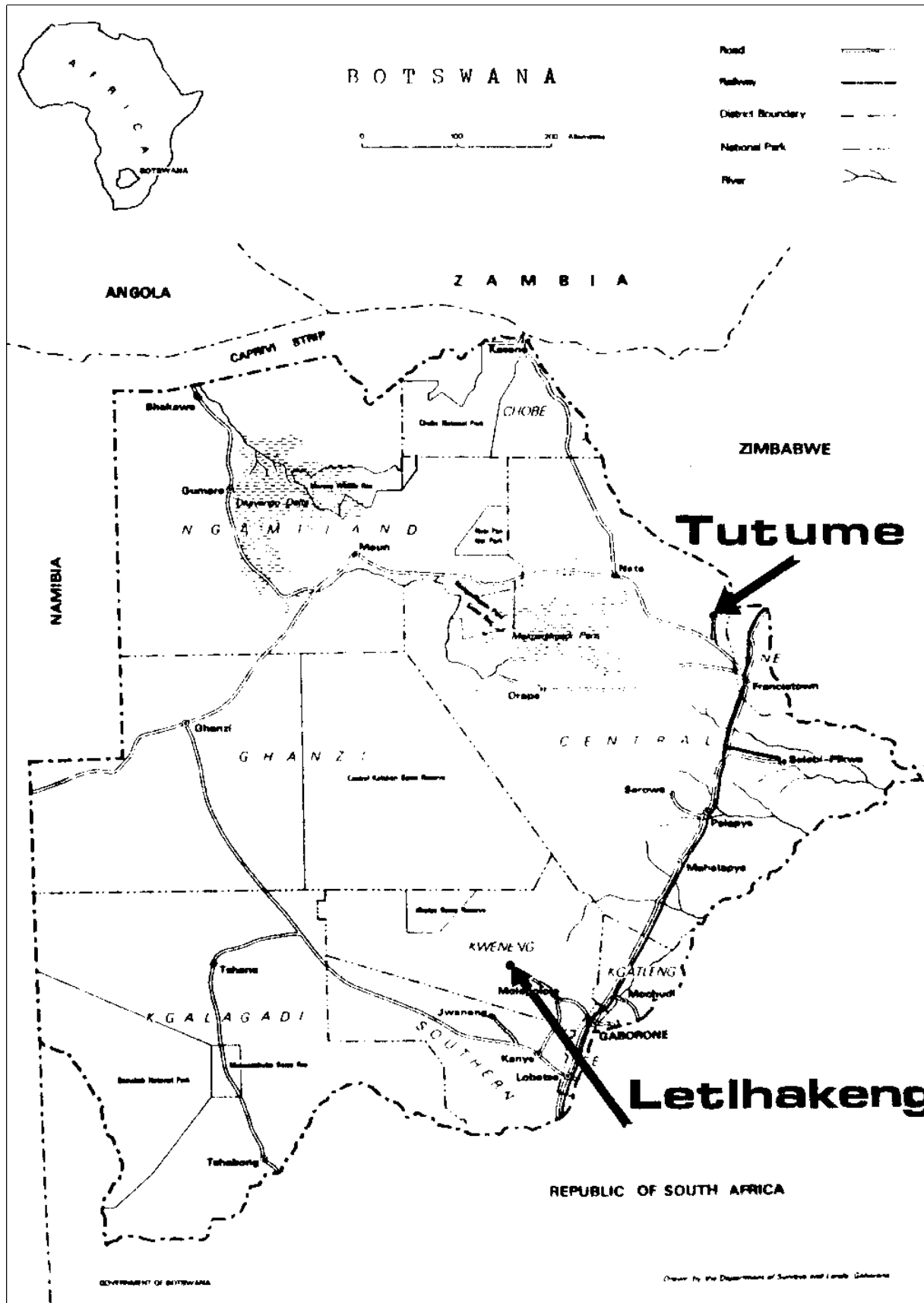
The two villages of *Tutume and Letlhakeng* were chosen for the household study both in 1980 and 2000. In a way they are both typical Botswana villages with a range of different types of households and they are both

large enough to give insight into the variation of livelihood strategies. Given this, the villages are also different. The two villages are situated in different ecological zones, their inhabitants belong to different ethnic groups and they are at different distance from the most important labour market – the capital. Today Tutume is three times as big as Letlhakeng. Thus, comparing the villages might give an insight into how the local context influences the household's level of living and income strategies.

*Letlhakeng* is situated in the central part of the Kweneng District, and lies about 60 kilometres north west of Molepolole. Kweneng District is located in the southeastern part of Botswana. Traditionally the villagers made their living from agriculture, later in combination with labour migration to South Africa. The climatic condition is better for herding cattle and goats than for crop cultivation. Thus traditionally cattle were the sign of wealth here on the outskirts of Kalahari Desert. The physical conditions for crop production can at best be described as meagre.

Climatically, Letlhakeng lies in a transition zone between the more humid East Botswana and the Kalahari. The mean annual rainfall is only 400mm. In addition, there is a substantial yearly variation. Most farmers are able to grow sorghum, maize, beans and watermelons. Traditionally the organization of farm work was based on help from the extended family and other types of communal work. Today this system seems to have more or less broken down. The village has a long history of migrant work. Letlhakeng started to send labour migrants to South Africa at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1939 it was such an important supplier of labour that it got its own recruitment office in the village. In the hey-days more than 50 % of men were absent on migrant work abroad. Today this situation has changed dramatically. There has been a reduction in the number of men finding work outside the village. This is mainly due to a change in the recruitment policy in South Africa.

A STUDY OF RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN BOTSWANA



The village has had a slow population growth if we look at the whole period from 1980 to 2000. In the beginning of the period the population growth rate was high, but it has slowed down the last ten years. In 1981 the population was 2616, in 1991 4379 and in 2001 it is projected to be around 4800. The chief describes a village, which is left behind in the development process. Except for the new focus that was given to the village due to its administrative role in Western Kweneng, there has been little new development in the village. The main problem is the lack of local jobs, which means that the better-educated people leave the village. This has happened at the same time as the traditional source for money for the unskilled labourers, South Africa has dried up.

*Tutume* is situated in the north-eastern part of Central District. It is about 120 km from Francistown, Botswana's second largest town. It belongs to Central District and is under the Bamangwato Tribal Territory. The physical conditions for crop production are somewhat better than in most other parts of Botswana. The annual rainfall is 550mm on average. The rainfall is, however, as unpredictable and variable as in other parts of the country. Nevertheless, the more humid climate and better type of soil enable the peasants to grow a relatively wide range of crops. Most households cultivate sorghum, maize, millet, melon, beans and groundnuts (Wikan 1981).

Tutume was never involved in the migrant work system to South Africa to the same extent as Letlhakeng. One of the reasons for this was that recruitment to the mines in South Africa was prohibited in Northern Botswana until 1934. Especially after Independence the majority of migrants from Tutume went to other parts of Botswana. Because of the good educational standard of the Bakalanga people they were able to compete successfully for the new jobs being created in the country.

Due to several factors the village has had an extraordinary population growth over the past 20 years. In 1981 the population size was 4083 in 1991 10070 and in 2001 it is projected to be around 18000 (DDP 1997). Decentralisation of the district administration is probably the main force behind this growth. Since 1980 the village was established as a Sub-District centre with all the administrative offices that go with the status, and social services have also been decentralised from Serowe. As a

consequence of this, the village has received improvement in all types of physical infrastructure such as telephone net, electricity, water supply, roads, schools and health. All this has created many local jobs. Population growth in Tutume has obviously created a market for private enterprises in the service sector. The numbers of shops, restaurants, bars, petrol stations and hair saloons show this. There is little development in the manufacturing sector except for three small textile factories producing for the uniform markets of schools and churches. The public sector has also created a number of new jobs in the village by establishing a hospital; more secondary schools and the extension of the sub-district headquarter. But lack of work is still a problem in the village.

The general development in Botswana the last twenty years is manifested different in the two study villages. Letlhakeng has stagnated while Tutume has grown. In both villages, however, the lack of development in local agriculture and the local labour market have resulted a problematic situation for many households.

### **Income-generating sectors and the rural household**

In Tutume and Letlhakeng the households have the following options for making a living: Traditional crop production or cattle rearing, local wage employment or local business, external wage employment or external business. In this chapter I will show the households involvement in each of these activities today and compare it to the situation in 1980.

In Tutume there has been a significant process of discontinuity of crop production. Whereas in 1980 practically all households produced their own crops, the figure for year 2000 was 66 %. In Letlhakeng the involvement in crop production on the household level, was about the same as in 1980 (table 1).

**Table 1: Income and the rural household, 1980 and 2000. Percentages.**

|                           | Tutume |      | Letlhakeng |      |
|---------------------------|--------|------|------------|------|
|                           | 1980   | 2000 | 1980       | 2000 |
| <b>Crop. prod.</b>        | 91     | 66   | 48         | 48   |
| <b>Local wage by head</b> | 22     | 41   | 11         | 16   |
| <b>Sale of cattle</b>     | 44     | 38   | 59         | 36   |
| <b>Sale of crops</b>      | 22     | 22   | 5          | 31   |
| <b>External wage</b>      | 60     | 36   | 33         | 26   |

All commentators on Botswana claim that crop production is on the retreat (BIDPA 1997). The development in Tutume is in accordance with that. However, the percentage of households still involved in crop production is higher than the literature gives impression of. Already in 1980 half of the households in Letlhakeng were none-farmers and there has been no noticeable decrease in crop production (Wikan 1982). Is that because of the lack of alternatives in this village, with its meagre local labour market and the almost complete isolation from mine work in South Africa? This might be the same process as Potts (1995) notes in Zimbabwe; people are retreating to subsistence production out of lack of alternatives.

The situation today in the two villages is that there are a substantiate number of households that are living there and are not farmers. Some of them have never been farmers, some says that they plan to take up farming, whilst others have discontinued farming. Size and assets are the two factors that significantly differs the non-farming households from the farming households. They are *smaller* household; they are more often *female-headed* households, *without any cattle* and belonging to the poorest in the village. These types of households are therefore those who lack many of the resources necessary for continuing with crop production. They have little money to hire help, they are short of household manpower, they lack their own draft power and they lack grown-up male manpower. Lack of male manpower seems to be an important obstacle to crop producing. It is the households that have men at home that most often produce their own crops. Francis (1999) says that that access to household *labour* will be one of the most important factors determining the households' future. Larger



households are more able to diversify their portfolios of activities and give labour to crop production as well as non-agricultural activities.

Crop production in Botswana is said to be a sub-subsistence activity. That is the households in general are harvesting to little to support the household with food through the year. In Tutume about half of the crop producing households and in Letlhakeng 28 % say that they get all the grain they need from their production. The rest of the households have either to buy or are given grain under some kind of Government programme or from relatives. Asking people if the amount harvested is enough to feed the household furthermore shows the sub-subsistence character of crop production. In Tutume 56 % and in Letlhakeng 28 % say that they get all the grain they need to keep them through the year from own production only.

There is little *local business* except the type linked to agricultural production, and few of the households involved in sale of agricultural produce get at substantial part of their income from the sale. You need, for instance, to have more than a 100 head of cattle to have a regular income from sale of cattle. In 1980, only 4 % of the households in Letlhakeng and Tutume had that big a herd. In 2000 the percentage had fallen to two in Tutume and one in Letlhakeng. Thus, between 1 % and 2 % of the households had herds big enough for capital accumulation. The development has gone in the opposite direction to what Hesselberg predicted in 1985 (1985). He foresaw that the group of big commercial cattle-owners would increase. However, they might have left the rural areas for the city in the period since 1980.

In Letlhakeng the South African cattle-buyers came on a regular basis and bought the cattle for a price far below the official figures. This was exactly the same situation as before the cooperative system was established in the mid-seventies. The reason the farmers still sold to the private cattle-buyers was that they could not afford to pay the costs to drive a small herd to Lobatse abattpor, some 200 km from Letlhakeng. Thus most farmers were forced to sell to the South Africans at a lower price. Small cattle owners sell to acquire money for necessary expenditures such as school fees, food and clothes. This is the same as we saw in 1980.

In Tutume 65 % and in Letlhakeng 37 % of the household have an income from wage labour. This is less than in 1980. In 1980 72 % and 51 % of the households in the two villages had wage incomes. There are many factors, which might explain the drop in formal wage income; the villages have had a population increase that outnumbered the creation of local work. This is especially the case for Tutume with its enormous population growth.

Unemployment is a problem. The local work opportunities are not good enough to provide well-paid and secure work for the households. In Tutume 60 percentage of the heads of households have no paid job, the figures for Letlhakeng is 84 %. At the same time the importance of *external work and remittances* from migrant household members is less than before, . In 1980 60 % of the households in Tutume had one or more member in external wage employment, the figure for Letlhakeng was 33 %. Thus, there are fewer households with external income from external employment today than 20 years ago. There are many possible ways of explaining this change. The out-migration of whole families to the urban areas is one factor, the lack of employment opportunities in South Africa is another factor and increased local work opportunities is a further factor behind this development.

To sum up; the following changes have taken place for the households in the two study villages since 1980. *In Tutume fewer households are producing crops, relatively fewer have wage income, the migration rate has gone down and the local businesses are still for the few. In Letlhakeng the percentage of households producing crops is the same, but as in Tutume fewer have wage income and fewer are labour migrants. Almost none is involved in local business.*

The relative number of households in both villages, which are not involved on a regular basis in any income-generating activity, has increased. In Tutume 1 % of the households had *no source of income* in 1980, the figure for 2000 is 12 %. In Letlhakeng the figures are 20 % and 34 %, respectively. These households are dependent on some kind of security net for their survival. The official social security system, such as destitute programmes, drought relief programmes, AIDS programme, orphans programme and old age pension picks up some households. Owing to an increased number of old people as many as 26 % of the households get old

age pensions. 42 % of the households say that they get some kind of transfer from other households in the village. Many researchers claim that the extended family system is about to break down in Botswana. However, the large number of households that get support from other households indicates that the system is still intact.

In short, the situation for the household can be describes as follows: the output of arable agriculture normally gives to little to support a household, the migrants' incomes in the urban areas are not high enough for them to remit a substantial amount of money to the household, the wage level locally for many households is too low to support a household. The question then is; *how are the households making a living; what are their resources and what are their livelihood strategies?*

### **Livelihood strategies**

MaThabiso is 60 years old and sharing the compound with her brother. She left her husband more than twenty years ago. He was a migrant labourer in South Africa and came home only to make her pregnant, as she puts it. She has got 5 children and 20 grandchildren. Three of her children have got jobs in town and are helping their mother with money every now and then. She has no regular source of money income, because of old age she had to give up her work as a cleaner at the local school many years ago. Because she speaks English well and is an educated woman, she was able to get hold of the grants the government has given under the ARAP agricultural programme. She got money for buying donkeys and for fencing the field. She has some plans to start a small shop, but is not able to finance the investments needed. She describes herself as very poor, but because she is still able to work and because she has got children who can support her, she cannot get support under any of the Governments social programmes.

MaPetra is 60 years old. She belongs to the royal family in the ward. At the age of twenty she was sent abroad to get her education as a health worker. There she met her husband and got one daughter. Today she is divorced and has moved back to her home compound where she stays with her mother and a number

of orphan relatives. MaPetra has got work at the local hospital. It was the fact that the village got its own Hospital that made it possible for her to move back home to the village and look after her old mother. MaPetra inherited cattle from her fathers' family and by investing part of her saving in the cattle industry has increased the herd, so today she has around 500 head of cattle. She keeps the cattle on a cattle-post farm from the village. She employs some Basarwa people to look after the herd. She also ploughs a large field not far from the village. She has her own tractor, but must hire labourers for driving the tractor and all the activities during the agricultural season. At the moment she hires labour from Zimbabwe. She has also invested in a bar and restaurant in the ward.

MaThabiso's and Ma Petra's stories are typical; the rural household is making a living by a combination of several sources of income. And there is much *variation* in livelihood strategies. Households combine different sources of non-monetary and monetary income to make a living (table 2). The most common combination is *wage income and farming*. In Tutume 50 % of the households and in Letlhakeng 39 % have this combination. The second most important livelihood strategy in the villages is farming; and wage income the third. Thus the livelihood strategies are complex and not all households use diversification as their strategy.

**Table 2: Livelihood strategies. 1980 and 2000. Percentage.**

|  | Tutume |      | Letlhakeng |      |
|--|--------|------|------------|------|
|  | 1980   | 2000 | 1980       | 2000 |
| <b>Farming for subsistence</b>                   | 10     | 11   | 15         | 6    |
| <b>Farming for subsistence and sale</b>          | 18     | 9    | 10         | 20   |
| <b>Farming for sale</b>                          | 1      | 1    | 4          | 3    |
| <b>Wage income and subsistence farming</b>       | 19     | 17   | 15         | 4    |
| <b>Wage income and farming for sub. and sale</b> | 39     | 28   | 15         | 18   |
| <b>Wage income and farming for sale</b>          | 8      | 5    | 1          | 7    |
| <b>Wage income</b>                               | 6      | 17   | 20         | 7    |
| <b>No source of income</b>                       | 1      | 12   | 20         | 34   |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | 100    | 100  | 100        | 100  |

Diversification of income, as the main livelihood strategy is not new in the two villages. Already in 1980, wage income in combination with farming was the most typical livelihood strategy. However, there has been a change in the importance of the different livelihood strategies. Since 1980 one can observe the following changes at the household level;

| <b>Tutume</b>   |           | <b>Lethakeng</b> |           |
|-----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| Farming + wages | Decreased | Farming +wages   | no change |
| Farming only    | Decreased | Farming only     | no change |
| Wage only       | Increased | Wage only        | decreased |
| No income       | Increased | No income        | increased |

The importance of wage income as the only source of income is strengthened in Tutume. Farming is less important than 20 years ago. Furthermore, the number of households without any means of income has increased. In Lethakeng, however, the development is different. Wage employment is a less important income source than 20 years ago, whilst farming as the only source of income is of the same importance as before. As in Tutume the number of households without any means of income has increased. There are location specific reasons for the decrease

It is furthermore important to note that, as in 1980, most of the combinations of income sources are at the household level. In 1980 Hesselberg finds that in Tutume 17 % and in Lethakeng 4 % of the households had members who combined wage income with farming (Hesselberg 1985). The figures for year 2000 are 29 % and 14 % respectively. Thus, the situation is still the same, diversification of income is mainly a strategy at the household level. However, there is an increasing tendency for individuals to have more than one job as well. Typically, women in wage employment in combination with crop production while men in wage employment keep herds of cattle.

Diversifications as an income strategy makes varying demands on a household's labour resources, and may often make *conflicting demands on the resources*. The conflict is often created owing to location of the activities in space. Farming is located outside the village, sales and cash generating is in the village and wage employment is often found in the urban areas. The result is that allocation to one limits allocation to other

activities. The demands of these activities on peoples labour-time is often exacerbated by the spatial dispersion of work, and often over considerable distances, thus effectively meaning that members engaging in one activity are physically cut-off from other activities. Farming has an extremely low cash- generating capacity, a factor that explains why most rural households seek to earn their cash income through waged work rather than the sale of their produce. Rural households are mostly doing sub-subsistence farming and are far from producing a surplus for sale. This means that it is *necessity* for most rural household to diversify.

The conflicting demand of the diversification strategy may affect the productive capacity of the household. Generally labour allocation to wage employment has a negative impact on arable production. Yet wage employment also enables some households to perform better in their farming, providing them with resources to invest in agriculture. There is therefore some trade off to be made in this varied income base. Some households have considerable labour resources they are unable to employ fully to produce for them.

*To sum up;* The percentages of households making a living only from subsistence farming has decreased in Tutume and more households have wage income locally as their income strategy today than twenty years ago. Many of them find their income in the village and thus there are fewer split households. Diversification as a livelihood strategy is less dominant today. Another development is the increased number of rural households with no source of income. *On a whole the picture I have described is both one of increased specialisation and increased proletarianization.* In Letlhakeng, on the other hand, traditional crop production is on the same level as twenty years ago and the percentage of households getting all their income from wage employment has gone down. Diversification is a more important livelihood strategy than twenty years ago. The percentage of households without any source of income has increased in this village as well. The different trends in livelihood strategies in Tutume and Letlhakeng underline the importance of contextual factors. One of the location specific factors that differ is the local labour market that is much better in Tutume than in Letlhakeng. The size of the village, agricultural conditions are among other factors, which may influence the households range of options

when choosing livelihood strategy. The point is that the importance of location makes it very difficult to predict rural livelihood strategy.

### **Household resources and livelihood strategies**

The household productive capacity depends on labour, land and capital. In the Botswana context, land for crop production is communal and therefore not a household asset. However, owing to privatisation of boreholes and fences, land for cattle is private, although cattle actually are grazing on communal land. Draft power, that is cattle, was the most important capital asset up to the present time. Selolwane 1992, claims that draught power is the household asset that usually is scarcer and therefore restricts the accumulation process of the household. In addition, household's demographic characteristics and size are important for the household's productive capacity and thus the objective at outcome of its livelihood strategy.

My data shows that diversification of income sources as the livelihood strategy, is not mainly a poverty or survival strategy; it is more common a strategy for the more resource-rich households. Diversification exists among all income groups, but it is more seldom found among the poorer households. That means, to be able to diversify a household must have a minimum of household resources (table 3).

**Table 3: Standard of living and livelihood strategy. 2000. Percentage.**

#### **Tutume**

|                         | <b>Poor</b> | <b>Middle-income</b> | <b>Rich</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Agriculture only</b> | 27          | 15                   | 4           |
| <b>Wages only</b>       | 14          | 20                   | 16          |
| <b>Diverse income</b>   | 16          | 58                   | 80          |
| <b>No income</b>        | 43          | 7                    | -           |
| <b>Total</b>            | 100         | 100                  | 100         |

**Letlhakeng**

|                         | <b>Poor</b> | <b>Middle-income</b> | <b>Rich</b> |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Agriculture only</b> | 24          | 22                   | 14          |
| <b>Wages only</b>       | 10          | 8                    | 14          |
| <b>Diverse income</b>   | 15          | 51                   | 70          |
| <b>No income</b>        | 51          | 17                   | -           |
| <b>Total</b>            | 100         | 100                  | 100         |

*The poorest households* are either not having any visible income source at all or they have one source of income only. Only about 15% of the poorest households have diversified their resources. The type of wage income they are engaged in is mostly insecure and low paid. 60% are working as housemaids, watchman, gardener or farm labourer. The local character of wage income is another characteristic of the wage income of poor households. In Tutume 10 % and in Letlhakeng none of this type of household has external wage income.

*The middle-income* households are typically working a multi-income strategy whose main combination is crop production and wage income. Some of these households are also living either from wages or from crop production. Especially in Letlhakeng quite a few live on old age pensions. The wage-labour profile of this group of household differ from the poor household: 25 % are professionals the rest have stable work either in shops, as mechanics or clerical work in the public sector. *The richest households* are the type of households, which diversify their resources most. As with the other group the typical livelihood strategy is a combination of crop production and wage income. In Tutume 75 % of the wage earners in these household are professional that is it needs a certificate to have the job. Also in Letlhakeng this group differs from the other groups because of the higher professional level of the wage earner. 40 % of these households have work, which demand educational background.

In this material there is nothing so far to support the hypothesis that the richest households chose less complex livelihood strategies than the middle-income households (Grown & Sebstad 1989). Quite the opposite;



the richest households are the most multi-active of all households. One explanation for this might be the fact that for instance land is still free in Botswana. That makes it possible for the households with resources to make private profit on communal land by holding large cattle herds. Hence, the richest household have in such a national context, an environment for accumulation of wealth.

Other household specific characteristics that influence the household livelihood strategy are size and composition of the labour force (table 4). *The households that have diversification as their livelihood strategy* are often larger and headed by a man. Often they have more than one grown-up female and more than one grown-up man. This means that these households have ample supply of labour for all kind of tasks. The head of household is better educated than the average; this might imply that this household has members that can get better-paid and more lasting work. The head of the household has often a local job; which makes it easier for the household to combine wage income and arable agriculture. It has had a history of former migration and also keeps cattle; a few have enough cattle for accumulation. Cattle and former migration might be interlinked factors and give this type of household an economic platform that has brought them out of the poorest layer in the village.

**Table 4: Household characteristics and livelihood strategies. 2000.**

**Tutume**

|                  | Single agri. | Single wage | Diverse income | No income | Tot. |
|------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|------|
| < 5hh size       | 50           | 68          | 27             | 80        | 45   |
| Female household | 38           | 35          | 22             | 50        | 31   |
| > 1 grown female | 59           | 29          | 61             | 28        | 52   |
| > 1 grown male   | 27           | 15          | 48             | 10        | 35   |
| No ed. head      | 18           | 6           | 7              | 30        | 12   |
| Local work head  | 100          | 68          | 80             | -         | 78   |
| Former migration | 29           | 12          | 44             | 30        | 24   |
| Have cattle      | 40           | 36          | 79             | 30        | 57   |
| Cattle > 100     | -            | 3           | 2              | -         | 2    |

**Lethakeng**

|                            | <b>Single agri.</b> | <b>Single wage</b> | <b>Diverse income</b> | <b>No income</b> | <b>Tot.</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>&lt; 5hh size</b>       | 46                  | 36                 | 28                    | 49               | 39          |
| <b>Female household</b>    | 27                  | 29                 | 21                    | 67               | 38          |
| <b>&gt; 1 grown female</b> | 45                  | 71                 | 60                    | 35               | 64          |
| <b>&gt; 1 grown male</b>   | 36                  | 14                 | 45                    | 18               | 32          |
| <b>No ed. head</b>         | 70                  | 64                 | 51                    | 79               | 64          |
| <b>Local work head</b>     | 100                 | 55                 | 73                    | -                | 75          |
| <b>Former migration</b>    | 82                  | 36                 | 76                    | 43               | 62          |
| <b>Have cattle</b>         | 48                  | 14                 | 67                    | 3                | 38          |
| <b>Cattle &gt; 100</b>     | -                   | -                  | 10                    | -                | 1           |

*The single-income agricultural* household, that is household with only income from agriculture, is smaller than the average household and is often female-headed.. It has more grown-up females than the average but fewer men, judging by the results from Tutume. The education level of the head of household is low and if they have work they are employed locally. In Tutume fewer and in Lethakeng more of this household has a migration history. It has some cattle, but too little for accumulation. Cattle can give this household money income to secure survival, but not accumulation. The single-active agricultural household might be a residual of the traditional Tswana or Kalanga household; the *single-income wage-income* household is small and more often male headed than the single-active agricultural household. It has seldom more than one grown-up man in the household and he is often a migrant. Few of this household have had any former migration and they rarely have more cattle than households with other types of income strategies. They are more often better educated than the single-active agricultural household.

*In conclusion;* the households that have diversification as the livelihood strategy have more and better labour and more capital than the others, whilst the single-income household are short of labour. If they have an education they might choose to rely totally on wage income. The older more traditional single-income household, often with few resources but some cattle, becomes single-income agricultural. They are very often the poorest households with little security. This can be seen by the fact that they are selling cattle to meet their needs. Hence, capital basis, labour,

household size and educations are factors positive correlated with more complex livelihood strategies.

## Conclusion

Making a living in rural Botswana today does not involve withdrawing from markets and concentrating on subsistence production. There is nowhere to retreat to, certainly not a mythical subsistence economy. In Botswana the case is that arable farming cannot provide most households with an adequate living. Botswana, like the rest of rural Africa, has been locked into the market since the colonial period: paying taxes, buying food, selling crops, cattle and labour. Most compelling of all, most rural households do not grow enough food to provide them through the year and have not been able to do so for decades. The way households are coping with this situation differs. It differs between households and it differs between regions. However it seems that one generalisation can be made: Rural people tend to construct their livelihoods by combining different income-earning activities.

Even though diversification is the most common livelihood strategy, the motive for diversification differs. For the poorer households diversification is a *survival strategy*, for the more well-off households it is a strategy for *minimising risks*, for the most wealthy households this might be a strategy for *accumulation of wealth*. There is also a tendency that the younger and educated are discontinuing crop production and are living on salaries, or if they have no income, they prefer to live on handouts. The poorest households have too few resources to diversify. They are living from a range of low paid and insecure income sources, or from their own subsistence crop production, or simply from drought relief money or old age pension. Some household diversify their income by dislocating household labour to other places in Botswana or abroad. This is mainly an option for the richest households. For the majority of the households, diversification means combining different local sources of income.

The factors determining the livelihood strategy a household are partly household specific. Educational level, sex and age composition, household size, capital basis and so forth differ among the rural households. It is these

differences that set one type of households in a position to accumulate wealth while other households are kept in poverty. Thus, household resources are factors that trigger and uphold the process of social differentiation in the rural villages.

Diversification as the main income strategy is nothing new in rural Botswana. This was the main strategy in 1980 and probable also earlier. Crop production in Botswana has never had the potential to provide a surplus on a regular basis. The natural conditions are too poor. Thus, cash crops were never introduced on a large scale in Botswana. This makes rural Botswana different from most other African countries. When the demand for money was introduced in the colonial period, the rural people had to sell their labour in order to find money. So in Botswana diversification is a livelihood strategy, which can be traced back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The development process in Botswana has lead to poverty and plenty. The households with resources to succeed in the modern economy have increased their standard of living considerably over the last twenty years. In rural areas they are the few. The households with small resources become marginalized and proletarianized and live from handouts from the state or relatives. This is an increasing group. The majority of rural households are making a living by diversifying their resources and surviving by combining income from the modern market economic sector and the traditional subsistence sector. Hence, the picture is more or less the same as in 1980 - an economy in-between and people making the best out of this economy in transition.

## References

- Abdulai, A & A.CroleRees (2001) Determinants of income diversification amongst rural households in southern Mali. *Food policy*, 26.
- Baker, J. (1995) Survival and accumulation strategies at the rural-urban interface in northwest Tanzania. *Environment and Urbanization*, vol.7, no.1.

- Barrett, C.B. (2001) Nonfarm income diversification and household livelihood strategies in rural Africa: concepts, dynamics and policy implications. *Food policy*, 26.
- Bebbington, A. (1999) Capitals and Capabilities: A framework for analysing peasant viability, rural livelihoods and poverty. *World Development*, 27, 12.
- BIDPA. (1997) *Study of poverty and poverty alleviation in Botswana*. Government printer, Gaborone.
- Curry, R.L. (1987) Poverty and Mass Unemployment in Mineral-rich Botswana. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, vol. 46.
- Dahlberg, A.C. (1995) On interpreting environmental change: time, space and perception in the case of Kalakamate, North East District, Botswana.
- Dahlberg, A.C & P.M. Blaikie. (1996) *Environmental change in rural Botswana. Changing landscapes or different interpretations. A case study from North East District Botswana*.
- Datta, A.K. (1995) *Rural poverty in Botswana*. University of Botswana.
- DDP Central. (1997) *District Development Plan Central*. Ministry of local government and lands, Gaborone.
- Edge, W.A. (1998) Botswana: A developmental state. In Edge & Lekorwe. *Botswana. Politics and Society*. J.L. van Schaik. Academic, Pretoria.
- Ellis, F. (1998) Households Strategies and Rural Livelihood Diversification. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 35, 1.
- Ellis, F. (2000) The Determinants of Rural Livelihood Diversification in Developing Countries. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 51, 2.
- Francis, E. (2000) *Making a Living. Changing Livelihoods in Rural Africa*. Routledge, London.
- Francis, E. (1999) Learning from the local: rural livelihoods in distsobotla, North West Province, South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 17.
- Ganry, F. Cambell, B. (1995). *Sustainable land management in African semi-arid and subhumid regions*. Proceedings of the SCOPE workshop, 15 -19 November 1993, Dakar, Senegal.

- Grown, c.A & J. Sebstad. (1989) Introduction: Toward a wider Perspective on women's Employment. *World Development*, 17, 7.
- Hesselberg, J. (1985) *The Third World in Transition*. Nordiska Afrika-institutet, Uppsala.
- Hope, K. (1995) Managing development policy in Botswana: Implementing reforms for rapid change. *Public administration and development, Vol 15*.
- Jefferies, K. (1996) Poverty in Botswana. *Botswana Society*, Gaborone.
- Jefferis, J. (1997) Poverty in Botswana. In Salkin et.al. *Aspects of the Botswana Economy. Selected papers*. Currey, Oxford.
- Jørgensen, L. (2001) Bønder spiller på mange heste. *Den ny verden*, 1.
- Orr, A. (2001) Adapting to Adjustment: Smallholder Livelihood Strategies in Southern Malawi. *World Development*, 29, 8.
- Reardon, T. (1997) Using Evidence of Household Income Diversification to Inform Study of rural Nonfarm Labour Markets in Africa. *World Development*, 25, 5.
- Roth, E.A. (1996) Traditional Pastoral Strategies in a Modern World: An Example from Northern Kenya. *Human Organization*, Vol 55, No.3
- Potts, D. (1995) Shall we go home? Increasing Urban Poverty in African Cities and Migration Processes. *The Geographical Journal*, vol 161, no.3
- Selolwane, O. (1992) *Labour Allocation and Household income strategies in Western Ngamiland, Botswana. Implications for agricultural development*. p.H.D. Thesis, Univeristy of East Anglia, Norwich.
- Smith, D.M. (1979) *Where the grass is greener. Living in an unequal world*. Pelican books.
- Wikan, G.(1981) *Absenteeism, crop cultivation and level of living in Rural Botswana*. Department of Geography, University of Oslo.
- Wikan, G. (1982) Absenteeism; Crop Cultivation and Standard of Living in Developing countries. *GeoJournal* 6.6
- Wikan, G. (1982) The impact of absenteeism on crop production and standard of living in two villages in Botswana. *Botswana Notes and Records*, 13.